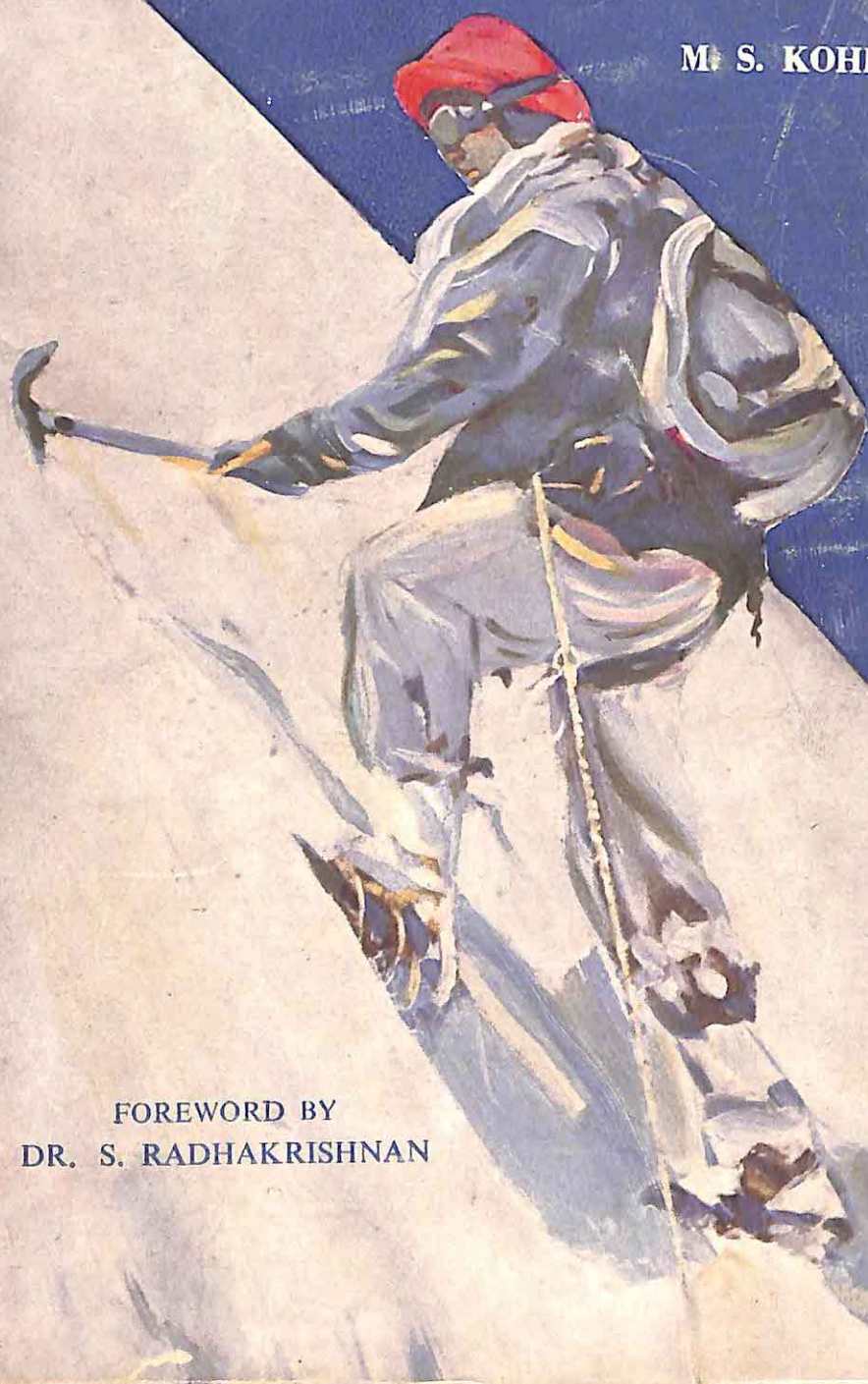


LAST OF THE ANNAPURNAS

M. S. KOHLI



FOREWORD BY
DR. S. RADHAKRISHNAN

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THE ANNAPURNAS

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M. S. KOHLI

Foreword by
S. RADHAKRISHNAN



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To my father

SARDAR SUJAN SINGH

FOREWORD

This is the story of the ascent for the first time of Annapurna III, one of the peaks of the Annapurna Himal, a peak towering 24,858 feet. Though not the highest of the peaks, its ascent needed to be freshly planned. The conception, the planning and execution of the ascent revealed the great courage, endurance, discipline and organisation of the team. This achievement is one of which we can be proud.

The story told by the Leader of the expedition shows the difficulties of the undertaking and the risks taken. The climbers are men drawn from different walks of life. The equipment used by the expedition was mostly Indian and that is another welcome feature.

The spirit of youth is essential for all progress. Young men in other countries are using the earth as a footstool and reaching out to the moon and the stars. Our young men and women are capable of similar feats if given proper training and encouragement. An ancient text, *Aitareya Brahmana*, asks us to move on and not stand still or mark time :

*āste bhaga āsīnasyordhvastiṣṭhati tiṣṭhataḥ
śete nīpadyamānasya carati carato bhagaḥ carai-
veti*

An idle man's fortune sits idle too. When one rises and stands upright his fortune also rises and stands up. As he lies down his fortune lies down with him. He who marches along has his fortune marching with him. Hence, O pilgrim, move on, move on !

The story of the Annapurna expedition, told with touches of humour, is inspiring and I hope that the book will be widely read, particularly by our youth.

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

*Rashtrapati Bhavan,
New Delhi.*

September 26, 1962

INTRODUCTION

If there were no mountains nothing more need be said; but since they are there, these high peaks, they have to be climbed. So said the Chinese sage some centuries before Mallory, who made mountaineering history on Everest in the early twenties, when asked "Why do you want to climb it?" answered "Because it is there". Mallory and Irvine together sleep their eternity upon Everest.

What else is there to say, of the high mountains and of the men who go and toil upon their slopes? They tend to silence; but when one of them returns and writes about it one is given a glimpse of their high adventure. Such a band of men are Kohli, who led his team to the top of Annapurna III and brought them back safe, and Sonam Gyatso, Girmi, Jungalwala, Shekhawat, P. C. Chaturvedi, K. P. Sharma and A. N. D. Nanavati.

Kohli was the leader of the expedition to Annapurna III (24,858 feet). This was an entirely unexplored peak, of which H. W. Tilman (whom little would daunt) said that it would probably be inaccessible. Tilman knew the Annapurna Himal well. He wrote: "From the broad back of the main ridge west of the Annapurna II or Annapurna IV either of these peaks could be reached, while Annapurna III, bristling with gendarmes and cornices, could not be reached at all". This was the peak that challenged Kohli and his team. It was the only virgin peak of the four great Annapurnas, called after Parvati in her manifestation as the goddess of plenty.

Annapurna I (26,504 feet) was climbed by Maurice Herzog, whose moving story is part of the Himalayan saga. Annapurna IV (24,638 feet) was climbed in 1955, and Annapurna II (26,041 feet) in 1960. Roberts, who led the successful expedition to Annapurna II, wrote of Annapurna III: "We looked at Annapurna III in the spring of 1960. There was a nasty ice-fall low down and we saw no obvious route."

A characteristic of the high peaks in Nepal is the long approach march, with problems of communication and logistics which have to be solved before an expedition can set

out at all. In the case of Annapurna III the situation was complicated by the lack of previous exploration and of information about any possible route upon the mountain.

The route finding, the struggle on the slopes of an unknown mountain, and the final success are modestly described in this book. But there are a number of features of the ascent of Annapurna III that are worthy of note.

It was the highest first climb of a virgin peak by an Indian team. The problem of finding a route at all undoubtedly weighed heavily upon Kohli and his men all through their preparations and the approach march. They made use of their acclimatisation period to survey the possible routes to the top; and finally they decided that there were only two possible routes. The one along the northern ice-fall was patently too dangerous to attempt; and this provided the decision to try the eastern col, up the eastern ice-fall which Jungalwala, Sonam Gyatso and Sharma had carefully reconnoitered during their acclimatisation sorties.

The expedition had the thoroughly unpleasant experience of unprecedented trouble with the local population, especially at Manangbhot. It is an inhospitable valley altogether, and has an unpleasant reputation of unfriendliness and hostility, unlike the friendliness one encounters everywhere else in the Himalayas. The expedition base camp was completely ransacked, and an attempt was even made to loot Camp I on the mountain. The liaison officer detailed by the Nepal Government to accompany the team was beaten up. The villagers took him away, along with Jungalwala and Sonam Gyatso, and they held them captive till the next day. There is the rather delicious relief in this situation, to read how the girl porters consoled the captives and brought them food. "The Manangbhot Memsahibs" the grateful team thereafter called them, those blessed damsels.

One cannot altogether condemn these ignorant Manangbhot villagers for their hostility and their cupidity. They were perhaps truly afraid, and honestly believed that the presence of the expedition, with its base camp below the northern ice-fall, would desecrate the White Lion's sanctuary. The White Lion guards the spring, holy to their rites and the lamas' meditations. The money they demanded was needed, they may have quite sincerely felt, for the propitiation ceremonies to placate the White Lion. They were

glad to see the expedition move away towards the eastern ice-fall. Did the White Lion make the northern ice-fall secure from providing the team with a route to the top? Was he modified, that the team was allowed to find a route up the eastern col? Who knows?

Unusually, for a high Himalayan peak, the climbers encountered soft snow, knee deep and at times waist deep, almost all the way to the top. It is more usual at those heights to find hard compacted snow, almost ice-hard, or powdery snow that the wind tends to blow off, or tending to avalanche; but not deep soft snow upon open slopes. One theory is that snow conditions on Annapurna III are due to warm winds rising from a heavily populated valley. There are villages of two to three hundred houses each, every mile or so, while Manangbhot itself is a largish village of about 500 houses, and within an hour's march from the foot of the northern ice-fall.

Indeed, it is another of Annapurna II's unusual features, that the base camp is within an hour of a permanently inhabited village and not, as is usual, remote from even a temporary summer habitation or grazing ground. It was of no great advantage to the expedition to be so near inhabited villages while on the mountain. Quite the contrary in fact, though one should not perhaps draw any general conclusion from their experience with the Manangbhots.

The sense of comradeship and close team work throughout the expedition shines through the narrative at every point. The ascent of the peak is evidence enough of it—for these high peaks draw demanding full upon the team's united strength. But it is good to read of the expedition and their sherpa companions united as a single team, carrying double loads on the mountain, often 80 or even 90 pounds each, and on the return with no porters available, as much as 120 pounds which is something to carry.

Once the final decision was taken, on April 14, to attempt the peak through the eastern ice-fall, Kohli's plan of action comprised five camps above base camp, with a build-up at each to sustain the points above, and to provide for two summit teams. Jungalwala and Sharma quickly established Camp I (15,400 feet) and Camp II (17,400 feet), before bad weather forced them back to base camp.

Kohli, Shekhawat and Chaturvedi relieved them, and Camp III (18,800 feet) was established on April 19. This was to serve as the advance base camp. Rumbblings of trouble at Manangbhot threatened the expedition's rear, and most of the equipment from the base camp near that village was evacuated to Camp I, to get things as much as possible out of the Manangbhot's reach.

From Camp III, Kohli, Chaturvedi and two sherpas climbed a 300 feet ice wall on to a huge snow shelf, and set up Camp IV at 20,800 feet. This was on the 22nd. Three days later the fifth and final camp was set up at just above 22,000 feet. On the 26th, a rope of four (a rather unusual arrangement) consisting of Kohli, Jungalwala, Sonam Gyatso and Chaturvedi made what seems to me to have been a gallant dash for the summit. Ten hours of hard going got them within 500 feet of the top, when bad weather forced a retreat, and next day everyone went down to base camp.

This appears to have been a wise move, for, although ten days later they were again poised for the summit attempt at Camp V, it provided much needed rest and a chance to recuperate, and the weather time to improve. Incidentally, the team also had the satisfaction of knowing, on May 2, that their rear was now covered, by the arrival that day of a Nepalese army platoon at Manangbhot.

From a new Camp V, placed a little higher than before, Kohli, Sonam Gyatso and Girmi reached the top (24,858 feet) at 4.15 on the afternoon of May 6. In the true spirit of a joint adventure, every member shares equally the credit for the success on Annapurna III.

Who are these men?

Lt. M. S. Kohli is a naval officer, a Sikh (his beard is not merely mountain growth). He climbed in the eastern Karakorum in 1956 with the late N. D. Jayal, who died on Cho Oyu two years later. Kohli climbed Nanda Kot (22,510 feet) in 1959, and on the Everest in 1960 he reached South Col (25,850 feet). In the 1962 Everest expedition, he climbed to 28,600 feet.

Sonam Gyatso, a civil servant, climbed Cho Oyu (26,867 feet) in 1958. On Everest in 1960 he and two others reached 28,300 feet; a feat which he repeated, in fact exceeded, in the 1962 Everest expedition by climbing to 28,600 feet.

He is in many ways the most remarkable of our high mountaineers—he literally walks up and down mountains before breakfast.

K. P. Sharma is a naval signals man, and fills in as Secretary of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation. He was in Kohli's Nanda Kot expedition in 1959, and got to the top. More recently he has been on the 1962 Everest expedition.

A. B. Jungalwala, of the Gorkha Rifles, explored the Hemkund region in Garhwal in 1954. In the 1960 Everest expedition, he reached South Col, and spent three nights there, at 25,850 feet. He has been upon Everest again in 1962.

V. S. Shekhawat is fairly new to the mountains, and has many years of climbing before him.

P. C. Chaturvedi, an Air Force Officer, is a keen bird Watcher. He had climbed Chowkhamba (23,420 feet) in 1959.

A. Nanavati, inseparable from his pipe, was the expedition's doctor. He too followed up Annapurna III with getting included in the 1962 Everest expedition.

The Sherpa who reached the top of Annapurna III is Sonam Girmi. His experience included Saser Kangri in 1956, Nanada Devi in 1957, and Cho Oyu in 1958. In the Everest expedition of 1960, he carried loads to the final camp above South Col, at 27,600 ft. Since Annapurna III, he has been on Everest again, in 1962.

These were the eight men upon Annapurna III, and six of them proved their stuff on Everest next year. Kohli in this book tells us more about each of them, how each one played his part in the common adventure, how they encountered and overcame the obstacles in their way, and of their final success upon the mountain. And to Kohli himself, recalling the final exhortation to him as the leader when they set out from Delhi, "bring them back safe", is due all praise for a good job well done.

S. S. KHERA

*Indian Mountaineering Foundation,
New Delhi.
September 24, 1962*

PREFACE

Our team reached the summit of Annapurna III, the last of the virgin peaks in the mighty Annapurna range of the Himalayas, on May 6, 1961. This is the story of the ascent. In a sense, our story of peak-climbing is no different from any other. But, no two 'mountain adventures' can really be the same, and I trust that this addition to the growing literature on Himalayan expeditions will be of some interest to both mountaineers and the general public.

We saw and experienced much in the expedition that was new, exciting and exhilarating. Together we lived and shared moments of risk, trials and hardship, all mixed up unpredictably with moments of extreme happiness, satisfaction, even ecstasy, and purposefulness. Adventure and altitude lend a new meaning and depth even to friendship, and this heightens the enjoyment of the adventure.

The writing of this book has been made possible because of generous and valuable assistance from many friends. My thanks in the first place are due to Nanavati and Shekhawat who provided interesting and detailed material for some chapters, making my job easier and quicker. I am most grateful to Lt. Col. Victor Longer who took great pains over the text which, in its present shape, is largely the result of his efforts. I owe much to Shri H. C. Sarin, member of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, who read the manuscript more than once and made many improvements in language and presentation. I also thank him for the constant help and encouragement he has always given us.

Our expedition was made possible by a grant from the Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs; equipment was loaned to us by the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute out of the Jayal Memorial Stores; Naval Headquarters and the Geological Survey of India helped with some useful items; and generous donations were received from various firms. We are grateful to all of them.

We are grateful to His Majesty's Government of Nepal for permitting the expedition and for their generous assistance to us, to our Ambassador in Nepal and to the staff

at the Indian Embassy for their constant help and kindness. Our sincere thanks are due to Lt. Col. J. O. M. Roberts for some very useful information about Annapurna III and its surrounding areas, and to Brigadier Gyan Singh from whom I have learnt much. I have greatly valued his advice on my mountaineering problems.

I owe much to my father for his continued encouragement and blessings for the success of the expedition.

I wish to thank my colleagues and the Sherpas who made this adventure memorable and enjoyable. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Chairman and members of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation and, above all, to our Prime Minister whose love for the mountains has been a great source of inspiration to us.

M. S. KOHLI

Darjeeling, December 11, 1961

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I

THE CHALLENGE

IT was the afternoon of June 20, 1960, sweltering as any other June afternoon in New Delhi. One of the members of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, who had done a great deal for the Indian Expedition to Everest, was happy to receive the members of the Expedition just back from the mountains after a most thrilling experience. He was happy because all of us had returned safe and greatly enriched as mountaineers. He congratulated us on our performance. Indian mountaineering, he said, had come of age.

His office was a busy hive. Heaps of files and Government papers were stacked on his table. There were several telephones ringing intermittently. Every two minutes or so, our conversation was interrupted. After one such interruption, he observed: "One day we must succeed on Everest. The next attempt on Everest will be in 1962." He then asked if any of us had mountaineering plans for 1961.

I had just returned after four memorable months with the Everest Expedition, losing nearly 28 lbs. in weight, and looked forward to a long spell of rest. I thought I had said good-bye to the mountains for a few years. But the thought of returning to their sparkling snow-capped heights sent an electric impulse through my body. For all the harsh, cold winds, the avalanches and the stinging blizzards, the lonesome days and nights, the countless hazards, the Himalayas are ever alluring. Mountains have always been with me a gripping obsession; the sight and feel of snow has a maddening effect on me. It tears me inside with an uncontrollable frenzy. As

a young boy, many years ago, I had made a pilgrimage to Amarnath (Kashmir). Since then, dizzy heights and luminous white snows have intoxicated me. Almost involuntarily, I replied, "If selected to do so, I should like to organise an expedition to Nanda Devi."

In the spring of 1959, while climbing Nanda Kot with the first Indian Navy Expedition, I had been bewitched by the magnificent twin summits of Nanda Devi and since then nursed a secret passion to return to those gleaming peaks. Thinking of Nanda Devi, I fell into a reverie. All kinds of thoughts raced through my mind. Why does man return to the mountains? Why does he climb them? Because they are there? Perhaps. Or, is it just to experience a sense of achievement? Or, to satisfy his ego? According to psychologists, part of the motivation for every human activity is fulfilment of one's ego. Be that as it may, the same laboratory test cannot be applied to all human impulses.

The magic of the mountains cannot be explained easily. They wear the mantle of the supernatural; there is a halo of mystery around them. Their inaccessible peaks present a challenge and offer a promise; they stir the human soul to its depths. They inspire awe; their jagged rocks, their fearsome crevasses and gigantic ice-encrusted, snow-tipped walls set the human heart trembling like the aspen leaf. And yet their lure and their challenge are irresistible.

Mountaineering, says James Ramsey Ullman, is essentially the conquest of fear. But, perhaps more than that, it is a manifestation of the questing spirit in man—like Prometheus searching for fire and bringing it to earth, heedless of the awesome consequences.

Mountaineering intoxicates you; it is at the same time a sport that brings out the best in you. Man takes from the mountains in the same measure as he gives to them. The mystic beauty and the magic silence of soaring mountains spur you to great feats of mental and physical endurance; and there is no satisfaction save in the ultimate accomplishment. But in this consummation is no conceit. George Mallory, standing on a summit, asked, "Have we vanquished an enemy?" and answered, "None but ourselves."

There was another telephone ring and I was shaken from

my day-dreaming with a jolt. About the same time, I was asked if I would submit my plans. Obsessed with the idea of attempting Nanda Devi, I went back to my post in Bombay in INS "Hamla", a naval shore establishment. After a few days, when I had studied various aspects of the Nanda Devi project and formulated a rough plan, I returned to Delhi. But events had taken a strange turn and I found my dreams of Nanda Devi were not destined to materialise. I learnt that Mr. Gurdial Singh, a Doon School teacher, had already planned an expedition to this peak. Unfortunately, in India there is nothing like booking peaks for expeditions as is done systematically in Nepal. This was, probably, the first time that such a situation had arisen. However, as it was neither convenient nor desirable to have two expeditions attempting the same peak simultaneously, I started looking for an alternative.

I suggested Annapurna III, which had hitherto not only remained unclimbed, but had not even been explored. It was the only major virgin peak in the massive Annapurna Himal. The well-known British mountaineer, H. W. Tilman, wrote in 1949: "From the broad back of the main ridge west of Annapurna II or Annapurna IV, either of these peaks could be reached, while Annapurna III, bristling with gendarmes and cornices, could not be reached at all." Here was a challenge worth accepting. The mountain had thrown a gauntlet. I picked it up. A mountain calls you: there is an overpowering force which pulls you to a peak. Annapurna III was calling me. This call was irresistible.

According to legend, Sage Narad, who loved mischief, once created discord between Lord Siva and his consort, Parvati. He made them blame each other for their "privations". Narad, full of good sense and wisdom, also contrived their reconciliation. The sage told Parvati that, in spite of his faults, Siva had many good qualities that made him supreme among the gods. He advised her to go to the houses where Siva went for alms, in advance of her husband and to collect all the food. She did so with the result that her husband returned home with an empty bowl. Parvati then fed her hungry Lord with the food she had collected and Siva was highly pleased. Parvati, thereafter, came to be known as Annapurna Devi, the goddess who is the giver of food.

We too were going to approach Annapurna in the hope that she (the goddess of food) would not disappoint us.

Rising majestically to a height of 24,858 feet, Annapurna III is the third highest peak of the widest Himalayan range, the Annapurna Himal, whose other three peaks had already been scaled. Annapurna I (26,504 feet), the highest of the range, was climbed in 1950 by a French expedition led by Maurice Herzog. Even today, when all the three great giants—Everest, K2 and Kanchenjunga—are no longer virgin peaks, mountaineers the world over look back to the ascent of Annapurna I as an unforgettable milestone in man's undaunted pursuit of adventure and as a symbol of his illimitable spirit of endurance. This was the first mountaineering success on a peak above 26,250 feet (8,000 metres), and justly received universal acclaim. Herzog, badly frost-bitten, shattered and broken in this gallant attempt, had to spend three long and painful years in a hospital.

Annapurna II (26,041 feet) was climbed in 1960 by a joint British, Indian and Nepalese Services expedition led by a British officer, Lt.-Col. J. O. M. Roberts. The summit of Annapurna IV (24,638 feet) had been reached three times, first by a German expedition in 1955.

Annapurna III had not been touched or trodden by man. I wrote to Mr. Tilman asking for information about this peak. He replied, "I am inclined to think that the likeliest way up would be from the Manangbhot side, but it did not look inviting for us to have a go at it in 1949. You may ask Roberts for more information as he has visited the Annapurna range on quite a few occasions."

Following his advice, I wrote to Roberts, who answered, "We looked at Annapurna III in the spring of 1960. There was a nasty ice-fall low down and we saw no obvious route."

I was in a blind alley. But what Roberts wrote filled me with renewed determination. I was baited with a silver hook. I had to organise a strong team that would match its mettle against this difficult, enigmatic peak. The thrill of exploring a route and attaining a peak no man had ever set foot on was enough to provide the driving force.

The Sponsoring Committee were informed that Annapurna III would be the mountain for me. This readily found favour

with them and I was asked to go ahead with my plans. But it was not till the end of December, when I received the necessary funds from the Committee, that I could really get down to my work seriously.

II

MARVE BEACH

THE beautiful Marve Beach, 25 miles from Bombay, where INS "Hamla" is anchored, became the centre of our preparatory activity. I have spent some of the happiest days of my life near this expansive, sandy beach. My room, called a cabin in naval parlance, overlooked this enchanting beach, where the frothing, foaming waves of the Arabian Sea come with the rising tide, bringing a message of cheer and hope.

Every afternoon, at the end of my day's work, I would go back to my cabin to watch the oncoming waves, feel the cool gusts of breeze and gaze upon the fishing boats returning home with the day's catch. The sun setting in the ocean, far away, provided a riotous backdrop. In these surroundings, at sea-level, I worked out the preliminary details of an expedition to the high Himalayas!

Planning a major expedition to a Himalayan peak is not easy. It is almost like organizing a military campaign, everything has to be chalked out with meticulous detail. One has to provide for a thousand and one situations, big and small. Nothing can be left to chance; there is no item too small to be left out.

All this means hard work, careful planning, patient organization and a missionary zeal on the part of everyone. When the curtain finally comes down and the play is a success, it is seldom remembered that the absence or presence of a single pin, just one faulty entrance or exit, the dropping of a single word or a slight carelessness in lighting might have ruined the show. So also in mountaineering, every item, every detail, every move has to be thought out carefully. The mountains do not forgive, and show no mercy; small lapses may cost lives.

A myriad problems relating to men, material and equipment buzzed in my mind for hours on end. The experience I had gained in the 1960 Everest Expedition under its leader, Brig. Gyan Singh, stood me in good stead. His technique and methods and the Expedition's food and equipment charts were of invaluable assistance.

The most important problem was the selection of a suitable team. Invitations were sent out to a number of Indian mountaineers, and from amongst those who volunteered, a team of six climbers was chosen with the approval of the Sponsoring Committee. My associates were experienced men with excellent mountaineering records.

Tall, sturdy Sonam Gyatso, with a face like a rock and the strength of a mountain, is a Sikkimese by birth, a Buddhist by religion, a Central Government civil servant by profession and a good linguist by training. Imperturbable, cool, even-tempered, soft-spoken, kind, gentle and cheerful—with a face which readily crinkles into a smile, radiating warmth and goodwill—Sonam is a pillar of strength to any team. He has a capacity for hard work and a fund of energy—no doubt generated by the enormous quantities of food he can consume at any height. He can always be depended upon to pour oil on troubled waters. About all, his mountaineering experience and technique can be rivalled only by a few. He was a member of the Indian expedition to Nanda Devi in 1957 and a year later, with another Indian expedition, reached the summit of Cho-Oyu (26,750 ft.)—the seventh highest peak in the world. In 1960, as a member of the first summit party of the Indian Everest expedition, he with two others, reached a height of 28,300 feet, thus getting to a point higher than any peak in the world except Everest itself.

As tall and sturdy as Sonam, but rough-looking, with a rugged face, deep-set eyes and high cheek-bones, cheerful, aggressive and bubbling with energy was Captain A. B. Jungalwala of the Gorkha Rifles, endearingly nicknamed "Jungi", meaning a warrior. This intrepid climber, who was also with the Indian Everest Expedition, reached the desolate, fearsome, snow-bound South Col, 25,850 ft. high, and there spent three long, dreary nights in support of the first summit party. Only a handful of mountaineers have ever spent three days and

nights in so inhospitable a place at such great altitude. I can never forget the night I shared the tent with Sonam and Jungi at the South Col. It was the worst night I have ever had, with trenchant gales cutting deep into our flesh, lashing and slapping us mercilessly, very nearly blowing us out of our tent. Jungalwala can be impatient but, otherwise, he is very good at heart, remarkably sincere and loyal, with an unbounded passion for the mountains.

Flt.-Lt. P. C. Chaturvedi, of the Education Branch of the Indian Air Force, provided a marked contrast. He was the thinnest member of the party, graceful, sober, thoughtful, shy, somewhat retiring and the only vegetarian amongst us. We often twitted him with being air-propelled. He has enormous will power and determination. He was a member of the Indian Air Force team which climbed Chaukhamba (23,420 ft.) in 1959.

Chief Yeoman of Signals K. P. Sharma of the Navy was with me in the Naval Expedition of 1959 when we together climbed Nanda Kot (22,510 ft.). He is slim, elegant, business-like and tactful, but always restless. The only outlet for his quick-silver energy was hard work, and he never spared himself. He had just completed the advance course at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute and Tenzing spoke highly of him. He was excellent at all planning work; he had an eye for detail and a methodical and punctilious mind. Hailing from Garhwal, he was born with a love for the mountains.

Lt. V. S. Shekhawat, of the Navy, 25 years of age, was the youngest member of our expedition. Slim, polished, sophisticated, with a resonant voice and piercing eyes, Shekhawat is a man of determination. He had climbed in Wales. This smart, young man, with a love for outdoor sports, is good-natured and mature for his years.

It was difficult finding a doctor. A number of anxious days were spent in looking for a suitable volunteer. With just two weeks left for us to start, the expedition was still without a doctor. Then suddenly, out of the blue, appeared Dr. A. N. D. Nanavati, who had seen the announcement issued by the Bombay Branch of the All-India Medical Association calling for doctors. I must frankly confess that my first

impression of this 40-year-old doctor, who was working as a Pathologist in the Haffkine Institute, Bombay, was not very favourable. It was perhaps the way he sported his pipe that misled me. It did not, however, take me long to realize how mistaken I was in my assessment.

Though Dr. Nanavati had no experience of high-altitude climbing, he had done some trekking. He had a good physique and was very keen on joining the expedition. We were very grateful to have him. There was a last-minute hitch about his getting long leave, but on the intercession of Mr. H. J. H. Taleyarkhan, Minister for Health, Maharashtra Government, Nanavati was given the required leave.

Dr. Nanavati has a genial disposition. Open-hearted, kind and selfless, he soon draws every one to himself. He has an angelic face. In his hands we felt safe.

Dr. Nanavati had to organize the collection of medicines which were donated by several firms in Bombay. Captain S. K. Das, the medical officer of the Indian Mountaineering Institute, had sent me long lists of medicines he thought would be required by the expedition. Though, on the basis of these lists, I had already collected a good many drugs and medicines, a lot more remained to be done. Nanavati soon got to work and completed the task in record time.

Two major considerations which influenced the selection of the team were the climbing capacity of the members and their ability to get on with one another. On the mountains a team must live closely knit like a family. The only company they have is one another's. There must be no angu- larities, no rough edges. Altitude plays strange pranks; the team must face the ordeals with complete, undivided unity. Each man's life and success depends upon the others'. This is the reason why the success of an expedition is as much the success of the whole party as of each member.

My team was strong. I felt elated and proud at the thought of leading these men. Sonam, Jungi and I had been together in the Everest Expedition and had grown to like one another; Sharma and I had spent many days and nights together, climbing Nanda Kot. Those thrilling moments when we both covered the last 500 feet of the steep and corniced summit-slope of Nanda Kot will, forever, remain fresh in our memories.

Shekhawat had been on a naval cruise with me in 1958. In the Seychelles, when all the ships' company were out on the merry-go-round, gambolling and attending parties, etc., Shekhawat would quietly slip into his trekking kit and climb the "Trois Freres"—the three fascinating rock pinnacles on this enchanted island.

Chaturvedi and Nanavati were the only members whom I did not know personally, but what I had heard of them gave me an encouraging picture. Later, when we got to know one another well, I was very happy that they had been selected for the team.

Collecting equipment is an uphill task. We were, however, very fortunate. Most of our equipment was loaned to us from the Jayal Memorial Stores. These stores are maintained by the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute to help Indian expeditions. They are paid for out of the Jayal Memorial Fund, instituted in memory of the late Nandu Jayal, one of our foremost mountaineers, who lost his life in the Cho-Oyu expedition of 1958. Almost all our equipment was indigenous. This equipment had been kept in good repair by the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute. To this were added a few new items manufactured by our Ordnance factories. Indian industry very generously donated a large number of articles, including marching boots, primus stoves, thermos flasks, cigarettes, watches, skimmed milk, canned fruits, transistor radio-sets and a variety of woollen garments. Some equipment was also obtained from the Army, the Navy, the Geological Survey of India, the Air Force Trekking Society and the Himalayan Club.

But we needed a few specialized items that were not available in the country. High-altitude fuel, Butane gas—a dry gas which does not freeze at great heights—was imported from Switzerland. It was necessary also to import aerated lemon and orange juice powders—a desirable item of equipment at high altitudes. One has to imbibe large quantities of liquids on the mountains to avoid dehydration, and the only palatable beverages are aerated juices.

Towards the end of November, we received confirmation from His Majesty's Government of Nepal that Annapurna III had been booked for our expedition. This was a great relief,

for there had been rumours that a German expedition had applied for permission to climb Annapurna III about the same time. We were now all set.

I got down to the selection of Sherpas, recruitment of porters, organizing of broadcasts of meteorological forecasts by All India Radio, collection and packing of rations, arrangements for wireless communication and other important details.

By the middle of January it was clear that high-pressure work could not be done from Marve Beach. Naval Headquarters agreed to my headquarters being shifted to the Naval barracks in Bombay, where I set up my office.

In Bombay I received a lot of assistance from Mr. O. P. Sharma, a teacher in the Sanawar School, who was doing his post-graduate studies at Bombay University. He was to have joined our expedition, but his examinations towards the end of March came in his way. He later went with Capt. Kumar's expedition to Nilkantha, and was successful in reaching the summit.

K. P. Sharma, who was working as Secretary to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, looked after the work of our expedition in Delhi. It was necessary for an experienced mountaineer to attend to a number of technical matters requiring personal supervision.

I had many anxious moments when I was informed by the Himalayan Society of Kathmandu of the revised rules governing the recruitment of Sherpas. These rules debarred us from recruiting more than two Sherpas from Darjeeling, and I had already requested Brigadier Gyan Singh and Mr. Tenzing to get us twelve Sherpas from there. The amended regulations posed a threat to our arrangements, especially as most of the experienced Sherpas of Nepal had already been booked by various foreign expeditions. I made a frantic dash to Kathmandu. After three days of prolonged negotiations with the help of our Ambassador in Nepal, Mr. Harishwar Dayal, and notably through the generosity of the Nepal Government, I was able to recruit an adequate number of good Sherpas.

I made a hurried call on Roberts, who was British Military Attache at Kathmandu. He readily told me all he knew about the Annapurna Himal. It was, indeed, a fruitful meeting.

On my return to Delhi, Sharma greeted me with a mischievous smile. "Do you know Shekhawat is getting married next week?", he said. I could hardly believe my ears. Shekhawat's wedding had been put off twice and there were well-founded indications that a further postponement was imminent, as wives are, perhaps, the greatest impediment to mountaineering. Shekhawat, however, confirmed the news. "It's not fair on the poor girl," I ventured to suggest with my bachelorhood concern for the fair sex. He said nonchalantly, "Oh well, for her it will just be a mild introduction to my Naval life." Shekhawat got married barely three weeks before the expedition was to leave Delhi and I was happy to learn that his bride gave him the necessary "leave of absence".

Flt.-Lt. Chaturvedi was to look after the storing of equipment and the packing of rations. He was asked to go to Delhi. But by mistake another Air Force officer, Flt.-Lt. Chaudhury, got called instead and turned up in Delhi. This somewhat delayed the packing of rations.

We assembled in Delhi on March 8. The next ten days were spent in feverish activity, packing our stores and making last-minute preparations. A thousand and one items had to be checked, re-checked, labelled and carefully parcelled. Profiting by our experience with the Everest expedition, we divided our rations in separate packets for use at low and high altitudes and by members and Sherpas. Fruit cakes, canned fruit and other popular items were included in the high altitude camp rations.

The allocation of duties was quickly made. Shekhawat, who was Mess Secretary in his last ship, was put in charge of food and communications. Jungalwala, with his knowledge of Gorkhali, was to look after transport, Sherpas and porters. Chaturvedi became our photographer and meteorologist. Sharma was placed in charge of equipment and general secretarial work. Sonam Gyatso was to procure food from local sources in Nepal—a job he had handled efficiently with the Everest expedition and which entailed constant visits to far-flung villages for collecting supplies for daily consumption. Each one had his hands full. Whenever we were in any difficulty we approached Mr. Sarin, without whose prompt and effective help our preparations could hardly have been com-

pleted in time. As during the Everest expedition of 1960, he was our sheet-anchor. Invaluable advice and encouragement also came from Mr. S. S. Khera, Chairman of the Sponsoring Committee, himself a keen mountaineer. On his advice, Dr. Nanavati delivered a series of lectures to the members of the expedition introducing them to the methods of first aid and other essential medical aspects of high-altitude climbing. These lectures were very helpful, for we could look after ourselves and the Sherpas and attend to minor ailments and injuries even when Dr. Nanavati was not with us.

I was summoned to meet the Sponsoring Committee on March 14. The Committee made very encouraging observations and wished the expedition god-speed and complete success.

On the morning of March 18, all our stores, weighing nearly five tons and comprising 300 packets, containing items of food, equipment, clothing, tents, medicines, photographic material and over 3,000 feet of rope, had been parcelled and labelled. We were ready to leave.

III OFF TO POKHRA

WHEN the Lucknow Express steamed out of Delhi Station on March 19 we leaned back, relaxing after days of flurry, rush and frantic preparation. Our bones and bodies were aching with the hours and hours of standing and the miles of running around that we had had to do during the preceding two or three weeks. We, therefore, thoroughly enjoyed the comfort of being in the train with nothing much to do. We were four in the compartment. Sharma had stayed behind to collect certain items of equipment that had not arrived; Sonam and Jungalwala had left by truck the day before to escort the baggage to Nautanwa on the Indo-Nepal border, from where we were to fly to Pokhra.

Chaturvedi was somewhat quiet, though he became animated when the discussion turned to birds—he is a keen bird-watcher. Nanavati and he became quite friendly. Our married companions were missing their families. Sex and mountaineering were intimately debated; marriage customs, fidelity in marriage and other similar problems provided lively topics of conversation. With the loosening of tongues, we were dragged out of our shells; we got to know one another better. Shyness disappeared and, with our defences gone, a greater *en rapport* was established.

After two changes we reached Nautanwa in the evening of March 20. Bhairavah, the air-terminal of the Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation, was about 10 miles and had to be reached by road. We were unable to get any information about Jungalwala, Sonam and the truck. As it was already dark we decided to spend the night at the station and the "Sind-Multan Hotel" in the village provided us with some dinner.

We had, however, not bargained for Nautanwa's mosquitoes. No sooner had we turned off the light than these well-fed, fat, pernicious creatures came buzzing from every side. Apart from Nanavati, who had the prudence to cover his face with a bed-sheet, we all spent a restless night, for the most part pacing up and down the platform.

Early next morning, Chaturvedi and Nanavati banged their fists on the platform tea-stall asking for tea. The stall manager was taken aback. He had never before started business till the first train arrived much later in the morning. However, he brewed some tea that looked foul, smelt awful and tasted worse. It was clear from Chaturvedi's face that he did not relish even the first sip; Nanavati said that he really did not feel like having tea!

We were tired and irritable. After breakfast at the Sind-Multan, we located a post office and a telephone exchange, from where we called the British Gorkha Recruiting Camp near Bhairavah. They had no news of our truck, but had been informed of our arrival and were prepared to extend whatever help they could. Their truck had left for Nautanwa and it could take us to Bhairavah in the afternoon. We spent the morning snooping round the village. The truck arrived and after the driver had finished his errands, we boarded it and left for Bhairavah.

The road from Nautanwa to Bhairavah was a relic of bygone days. The truck jolted and jumped, lurched and pitched, chugged and pulled as best as it could. It was impossible to sit; one could only stand, holding on to the shaking framework. Our bones rattled as they had never done before. Soon one of the bars of the truck snapped with a loud crack. The driver was unconcerned; he drove on without batting an eyelid. The framework displayed a number of welded joints somewhat like medals decorating the chest of a veteran. We were rather surprised to have reached Bhairavah without a mishap. We called on the Commandant of the Recruiting Camp to thank him for his assistance and later met the Bada Hakim (District Governor).

At the airport, we found our luggage neatly stacked and two familiar figures greeting us with beaming smiles. They were

Thondup, our cook, and Sonam Girmi, our Sherpa Sardar, who had arrived by train from Darjeeling to join us.

Sonam Girmi was assistant Sardar in the first Indian Everest Expedition and had ferried loads up to the last camp at 27,600 ft. He was an alert, happy and likeable person, short and handsome. His bright scarves gave him a striking appearance. His sincerity, loyalty, obedience and sense of discipline were remarkable. Besides, he was hard-working and dependable.

Thondup, a master of the culinary art, had been cook to many a successful British and Swiss expedition. He had also accompanied the successful Indian expedition to Cho-Oyu. With the halo of success around him—almost every expedition he has cared to join has succeeded—he is perhaps the most sought-after Sherpa cook. In 1960, Thondup joined the Indian expedition to Everest, but before it reached the Base Camp, he had to return to Darjeeling owing to the sad death of his wife. Later, when the expedition failed to reach its objective, many of us wondered if Thondup had taken away, along with him, the luck of the expedition.

He was referred to as Lieutenant Thondup when he started his career with the first successful expedition, and he was promoted with each subsequent success. When he joined us he had already attained the rank of a full Colonel. He would soon be a Field Marshal. There is no knowing how much farther than a Field Marshal he will go! Apart from being an excellent cook, Thondup is a good friend. When with the Indian Everest Expedition, he was appropriately described by Brigadier Gyan Singh as "God's own good man". He is a devout Buddhist with truth, goodness and piety enshrined in his heart. An added advantage in his case was that he had been with the Japanese expedition to Annapurna IV and knew the area well.

We were informed that a plane had departed that morning for Pokhara carrying Sonam and Jungalwala and a part of our luggage. The airline had declined to transport our tins of kerosene, as this inflammable material could not be airlifted without special sanction from Kathmandu. Jungalwala had left word that he would try to get the necessary permission for the next trip. These tins of kerosene had been poorly crated

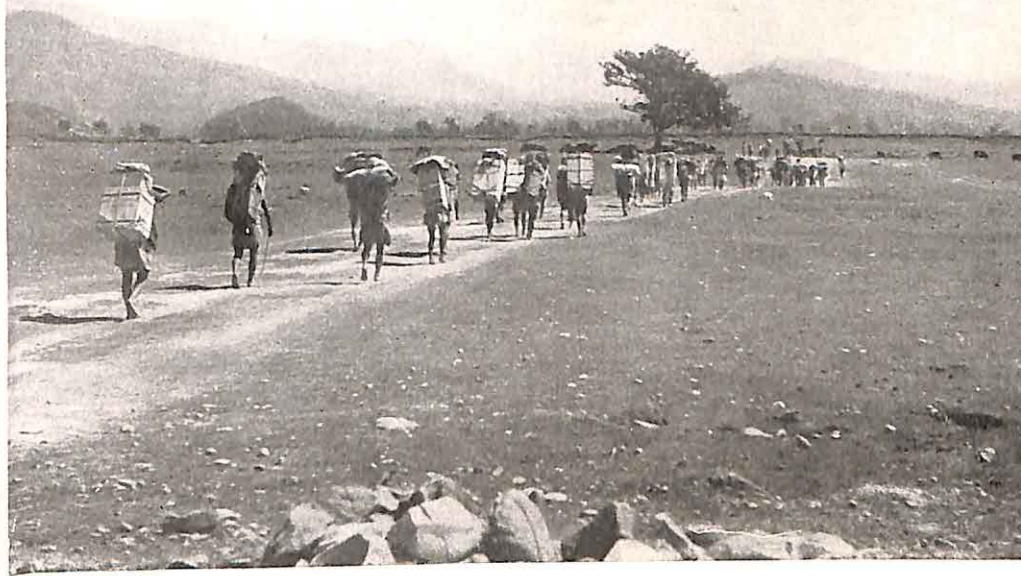


Loads being sorted out at Central Vista Mess, New Delhi



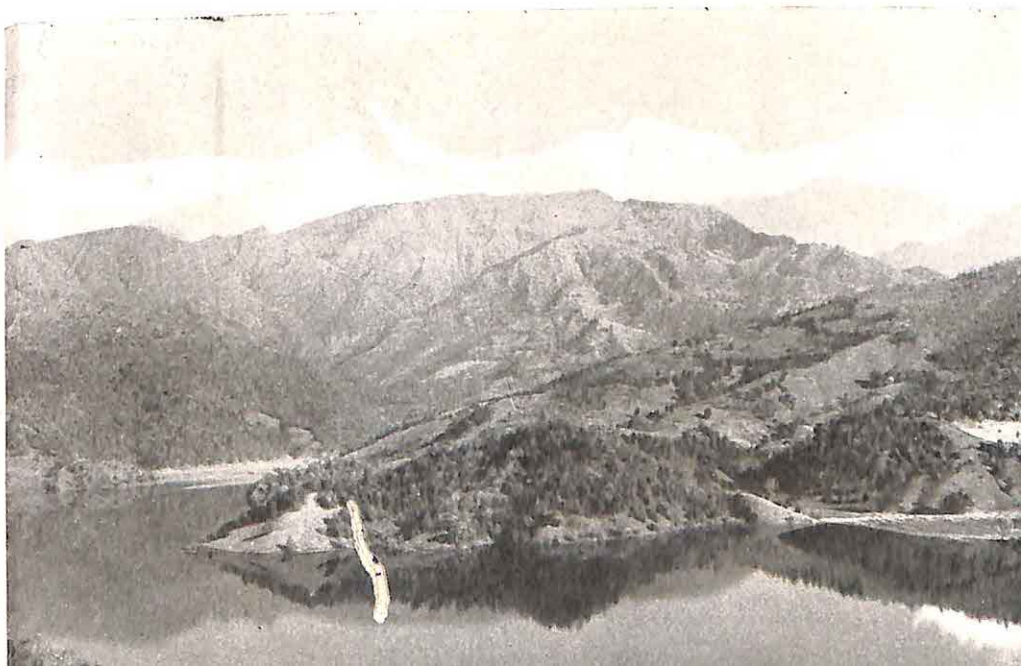
Members anxiously awaiting the plane's arrival at Bhairavah airfield
Loads being sorted out for the long approach march to Mananghhot





A caravan of porters leaving Pokhra

The beautiful lake near Pokhra







The party wading through a stream

The team resting during a halt for breakfast





Crossing another bridge beyond Khudi





Women extracting oil from seeds

The route became steeper and steeper and porters had to strugglehard





An old porter who was always cheerful

and, having been battered about, had started leaking. Therefore, we decided to sell the oil locally and utilise the proceeds for purchasing it at Pokhra, though it might cost us much more there.

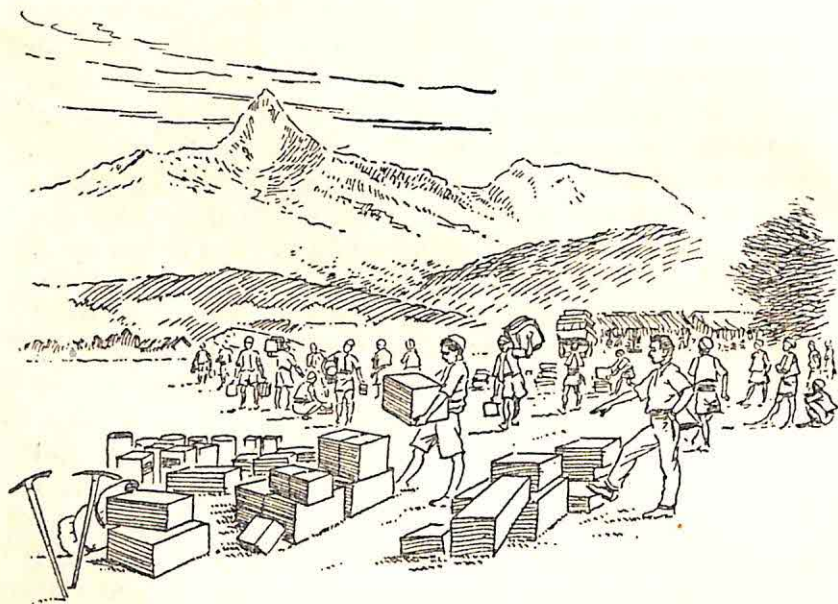
As there was little prospect of another flight that day and as Sharma had yet to arrive with the remainder of our baggage, which had to be trans-shipped to Bhairavah, we borrowed the British Gorkha Recruiting Camp truck to go back to Nautanwa. We met Sharma in the evening, collected our baggage, dined at the Sind-Multan and, to avoid the Nautanwa mosquitoes, returned post-haste to Bhairavah for the night. The airport at Bhairavah boasted of just one small plastered shed without any furnishings except a weighing machine. But it was open, airy and clean. We spent the night there.

We were ready early in the morning when the airport officials arrived, weighed our luggage and gave us our tickets. At 9-30 a.m., the scheduled time for the flight, there was no aircraft in sight. An hour later, the officials said it was unlikely that there would be a flight that day and we had better steel ourselves to spending another night at the airport. With nothing to sustain us except tea, we were far from happy at the prospect. At 12-15 p.m., however, we heard the distant drone of an aircraft. Capt. Balsara, the pilot, had a triumphant look about him as he had obtained the requisite authority to carry our load of kerosene. He was naturally disappointed when he heard that we had got rid of our supplies. He had taken a great deal of trouble to obtain the sanction. When we explained that the tins were leaking, he agreed that it was wiser and safer to travel without them.

The plane was loaded to its capacity. Yet a part of our baggage was left over. Leaving the overflow under the care of Sonam Girmi and Thondup, we left for Pokhra. We looked out eagerly to get a view of the Annapurna range from the air, but clouds and poor visibility prevented us from seeing anything. Our liquid diet of several cups of tea, combined with the bumpy flight, did us no good at all. We felt sick when we alighted at Pokhra.

We were met at the airport by Sonam, Jungalwala, Major Inder Singh of the Indian Pension Camp and Mr. Bal Bahadur Lama, who was deputed to accompany us as liaison

officer. In addition, a huge crowd of local residents had gathered at the airport. We recognized our Nepali Sherpas who had come trekking all the way from the Solo-Khumbu districts of Nepal. Welcoming us with their customary warmth and enthusiasm, they quickly unloaded the plane.



There were many familiar faces among them. Seven of them had been with the 1960 Everest Expedition and I knew them well; five of them had ferried loads up to the South Col, while the other two had climbed still higher, up to 27,600 feet. I interviewed all the Sherpas personally as I wanted to get to know them well. Their books of certificates and references, containing remarks by leaders of various expeditions, provided an interesting study. They revealed the whole history of Himalayan climbing. These Sherpas were experienced mountaineers, having been with eight or nine expeditions from various countries. They had picked up words from several languages, knew famous mountaineers and were well acquainted with the Himalayan terrain.

Sonam and Jungalwala narrated details of their truck journey from Delhi to Nautanwa. It was a new truck making its maiden trip, and the owner himself accompanied them.

En route, they were ferried across swollen streams and rivers and were stopped at hundreds of check-posts by officials demanding toll-tax. This invariably led to interminable arguments, with Jungalwala bullying the truck owner into paying the toll money or shouting at the check-post inspectors. The road at many places was none too good. Frequently the truck owner refused to proceed a yard further, but in the end always yielded meekly to Jungalwala's forceful persuasion. When the journey was over, he swore that never again would he venture to come to Nautanwa. "Poor chap, we must at least send him a picture postcard of the expedition as a souvenir," Sonam suggested.

Major Inder Singh was our host at Pokhara, and an admirable one too. Although we did not put up with him, as transporting our luggage to the Pension Camp would have been expensive, we did spend a lot of time with him during the four days that we stayed at Pokhara. He was good enough to give two delightful parties in our honour.

At the first party, the Bada Hakim, the District Superintendent of Police and other prominent citizens were present. This was a useful meeting. I was happy to learn that the Bada Hakim, a suave, cultured and amiable person, had completed his post-graduate studies in Delhi University about the same time as I did. Though we were contemporaries at the university, we had not met. The Superintendent of Police had recently been over the road we were to traverse and gave us detailed information about it, as also the stages by which we should cover the distance. The road was difficult at places, but not so bad as to cause any delays.

The party continued late into the night, after which the S.P. and the Bada Hakim gave us a lift in their jeep. I was anxious when the vehicle came to a narrow bridge over a small but deep river—the Sheti Ganga. The bridge looked too precarious even for pedestrian crossing, and I could not for the life of me imagine how a jeep loaded with ten persons could negotiate it safely. Everyone else was much too pre-occupied with a member of the party, who had got a little too merry (Sonam and Sharma had physically to keep him in place) to worry about the bridge or the river. I started breathing freely again when the jeep had safely got across.

Thanks to Major Inder Singh and his staff, we were able to procure the required quantity of kerosene oil in four-gallon tins at a reasonable price, which was more or less the same as we had paid originally. For the recruitment of porters, we met Naike, an agent appointed by the Himalayan Society to help us. This gentleman, however, was very ineffective. He kept saying that porters were not available and that we would have to wait. He had brought 80 porters with him from Kathmandu, but we needed at least another 80 to carry the five-ton load.

No account of the expedition would be complete without a reference to a bizarre visitor who came to our hotel one night at Pokhara. He had best remain anonymous. Chaturvedi called him "Our Man in Pokhara". He approached us with a conspiratorial air, speaking in low, confidential whispers, and warned us that on the third or fourth day of our march we should expect trouble. "Please don't take it ill," he said, "but it is my duty to inform you that there are many parties that will try to harm you. The route you will be traversing is a dangerous one and there are places where the loosening of a single plank may send you hurtling down into a turbulent river." We could not imagine why anyone should want to harm us. But the mysterious gentleman confided to us that there were secret motives. As the night advanced, his secretive whispers became louder and ultimately he led us into a garden, where he went on repeating his grave warnings over and over again. "Even as I speak to you, ten pairs of eyes are watching us and twenty ears listening to every word that I say," he added. "I am purposely speaking to you in a low tone and have brought you out into the open to evade malignant eyes and ears. Please, I beg of you, be very careful. I will send my man in advance to survey the route. I won't divulge his name, but he will reveal his identity if it should become necessary. If he signals to you that the road is unsafe, please don't go forward. I cannot tell you the name of my agent. That would be dangerous," he whispered. Then, turning to the proprietor of the hotel where we were staying and speaking in Nepalese, he requested him to close down his hotel for a few days and go ahead to survey the route for us!

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"Our Man in Pokhara" wove such a plausible web that we were taken in for a while and might have accepted him seriously had it not soon become evident that whatever secret information he had to impart was inspired by the large quantity of alcohol that he carried inside him! He went on talking incessantly till every one of us had given up the pretence of politeness and retired to our rooms for the night, leaving him all by himself. When he found himself without an audience, he left. The hotel proprietor wanted to see "Our Man in Pokhara" safely home, but this led to an argument with his wife, who would not let her husband go out alone in the night. He, therefore, requested, Nanavati, who was still awake, to keep him company. At this Lama shot out of his bed, protesting that it was his responsibility as an official of the Nepalese Government to accompany the proprietor. Here was Lama displaying a highly praiseworthy and reassuring sense of duty; but Nanavati persuaded him to go back to bed. Then both Nanavati and the proprietor trailed out of the hotel looking for our well-wisher, who might in that state of inebriety have run berserk; but they found that he had already gone. Often during the expedition, we thought of "Our Man in Pokhara". His memory was like a mascot for us. Whenever we were bored or tired, it was an antidote to recall his prophetic words!

Trouble with the Sherpas at Pokhara very nearly wrecked the expedition. The rates of payment and conditions of employment for Sherpas accompanying mountaineering expeditions are prescribed officially by the Himalayan Society. The pay scales depend on whether they are given a complete set of equipment and clothing or they bring their own kit. The Himalayan Society had been informed earlier that the Sherpas would provide their own equipment, for which they should be paid. But a few days before we left Delhi intimation had been received that the Sherpas would not be bringing any equipment and that they expected this to be supplied to them by the expedition. In the last minute rush, equipment for the Sherpas was obtained through Brigadier Gyan Singh, who, as Principal of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling, issued the material from the Institute. When this was distributed among the Sherpas, they refused to accept it as it was not brand new. Of course, to the Sherpas

the equipment they receive from an expedition is far more valuable than the salary; for they can always sell the material later at bargain prices. The Sherpas were annoyed and wanted to be relieved of their duties. Luckily, the crisis was averted and a settlement arrived at when we promised to pay them their full wages plus a set of woollen clothes.

The procurement of woollen clothes now became a problem, as we were scheduled to leave the next day. Jungalwala and Sharma, with two Sherpas, went at night, rummaging among the shops in the bazaar to buy suitable woollen material. Then a tailor had to be found. Once again Major Inder Singh came to our rescue. The woollen material was taken to the tailor at the Pension Camp, where measurements were taken and all the tailoring done during the night.

Very late at night, Sharma and Jungalwala returned, thoroughly worn out, but we were happy that the situation had been saved. The stage was now set for the long march to Manangbhot.

IV

MARCH TO MANANGBHOT

MARCH 25, was a bright and clear day; the sun shone radiantly. We considered it a good omen for our start.

There was a sizeable crowd at the airport and our transport officer, Jungalwala, with Sherpa Sardar Sonam Girmi, got busy sorting out the packages. There were as many spectators as porters. Sonam Girmi and the Sherpas had carefully piled up the packages in neat rows in a corner of the airfield which was cordoned off to protect it from the invasion of porters, some of whom had hung around since the preceding night, to spot out the easiest and lightest load.

It was already 7 o'clock, but our porter agent was nowhere to be seen. Judging from the crowd milling around our baggage, I thought for a moment that we had more porters than we required. But after Jungalwala had distributed the number discs among the men, we found that there were only 109 porters, including the eighty whom the agent had procured from Kathmandu. There were many more packages to be lifted. We had to get going and make the best of a bad job. Nanavati, Shekhawat, Chaturvedi and Bal Bahadur Lama, the liaison officer, joined the caravan of porters which streamed out at a jaunty pace.

To overcome the shortage of porters we increased the size of the load, promising them higher wages; but even then we needed a minimum of 135 men. After the advance party had left, we still had 26 loads to be carried. A last-minute search was made for additional porters, with Major Inder Singh, the aerodrome officer, the Bada Hakim and others joining in. We managed to get twenty more. We pressed some of the spectators to help, hoping that more porters would be available

at the later stages. We also offered to pay off the new porters the same evening. This had the desired effect and finally at 1-30 p.m. all our loads had left the aerodrome.

We exchanged our money for small coins, as paper currency is not valid in the interior. The weight of these coins alone formed a full porter-load and a Sherpa, Norbu Gyalzen, was deputed to go with the porter. Gyalzen never left the porter alone for a moment and accompanied him like an armed escort.

The agent was a little put out because we had made our own arrangements. He had had no hand in the recruitment of new porters and perhaps, left to himself, he would have taken another ten days to meet our requirements. He was seen trying to incite the porters against us, telling them that the loads were too heavy and advising them to desert. He knew that he would get no commission from those who had been directly recruited by us. This had upset him. But Jungalwala, with his fluency in Gorkhali, dealt with him effectively. The agent was an excitable person. Every now and then he would make dramatic gestures, throwing his arms up in the air. Jungalwala, however, had enough talent to match such histrionics.

When all our equipment and baggage had left, Sonam, Sharma, Jungalwala and I dispatched a few telegrams and letters, after which, at about 3-30 p.m., we left with Major Inder Singh in his jeep. The road up to Sisuva was jeepable. Winding through paddy fields and small villages, the jeep ride was not too bad for all the jerks and jolts, and in just about an hour we reached our camp.

The mess tent was pitched. It was to house all the members of the expedition and our liaison officer as well. Here, Thondup prepared the first meal, which was a delicious lunch of egg curry and rice.

Next morning at 5-30, the kitchen boy, Da Nami, entered the mess tent with tea. We were already up. As some porters had gone back and we could get no replacements, the agent arranged for some ponies. As regards the Sherpas, we had little to worry about. They took care of all details, such as looking after the camp, our personal luggage, meals, laundry, etc. We called them our "Sherpa sathis", meaning Sherpa

companions—a term coined by Brigadier Gyan Singh during the 1960 Everest Expedition.

While with the Everest Expedition, we had experimented with various meal timings and had eventually come to the conclusion that the most convenient schedule was to start the day early with a cup of tea and biscuits, to be followed by hot breakfast after a two-hour march. Our cooks always went an hour in advance to prepare the breakfast. We decided to adhere to this system, notwithstanding the loud dissenting vote of Jungalwala, a voracious eater who was all for an early hot breakfast.

Those of us who tried to walk with the porters in order to keep an eye on the baggage and ensure that it reached the next halt in time found it irksome and exasperating. Compared with the sturdy, nimble-footed porters of East Nepal, mostly Sherpas, our men were rather weak and given to the habit of resting at short intervals. Certain public benefactors had built resting places in this area, usually under small shady groves. Our porters did not believe in by-passing a single "chautara". Their slow, ambling gait, punctuated by regular halts, was so annoying that eventually none amongst us was willing to escort them.

Sherpa Sardar Sonam Girmi, who had to bring up the rear, marching with the last porter, worked with great zeal, energy and drive. He would come last and chase the porters out of the "Bhaties", which were a sort of wayside inn where tea and liquor could be obtained. Almost half the houses in each village were run as "Bhaties", and most of these were managed by attractive women—an added temptation to the passers-by to drop in for a little rest, a glass of chang, rakshi (a local brew) or tea.

These "Bhaties" were long, spacious halls—in the colder regions they were just dark, dingy rooms—with coir matting or gunny bags to cover the floor and cheap calendars with pictures of film stars to adorn the walls. Customers had to squat on the ground, though sometimes coloured carpets or jute matting were offered to sit on. Long or small tables, six inches high, were placed in front; on these rakshi was served in small cups. Brass vessels, nicely polished, were arranged

was astonishing to notice that in many villages, the most important wood-cutting tool, the axe, was conspicuous by its absence. Wood was cut, shaped and carved with hammer and chisel. Most of the houses were covered with rich wood-carvings of intricate designs, depicting traditional religious symbols and themes from myths and legends.

Each village had a Mukhia or headman, one of whose duties was to keep the country tracks clean, maintain the bridges and generally look after the villages. The Mukhias extended their co-operation to us everywhere.

The people were fond of singing, dancing and drinking rakshi; the women were lively and uninhibited and wore garments of bright, blazing colours. The men usually wore shirts and trousers—shorts or Jodhpurs—while the women wore simple, short waistcoats and bright skirts with an extra shawl to drape themselves with. Similar gay shawls of a shorter variety, called "Mujatro", were tied round their heads. The wealthier women were elaborately draped in sarees and bedecked with fine jewellery.

It was wonderful to see how passionately fond of flowers these people were. Both men and women often wore a single bloom peeping from behind their ears. They believed, perhaps, in the wisdom of the old Persian poem: "If you have one pice, spend it on rice, if you have two pice, spend half on flowers, for flowers are the nectar of the soul."

Polygamy was common among the inhabitants. We were told that the oldest wife had the strongest legal claim over her husband. The younger wives enjoyed a less secure position, especially as full marriage ceremonies were not performed to solemnize the second and subsequent unions.

On the seventh day of our trek we reached Thonje. We were now north of the main Himalayan crest and once again in the open countryside. The vegetation had changed; there were no paddy fields and the terraces all over were forested with pine and fir trees. The houses were low and built of stone; the people were rugged but very cordial and cheerful. We were welcomed here by the check-post officials. The Nepal Government had very kindly permitted us to transmit and receive our wireless messages from this post.

Here, Jungalwala met a Gorkha soldier of his own regiment. The latter's pleasure and pride in meeting an officer of his regiment, deep in the interior of Nepal, can well be imagined. We employed him as our mail-runner for some time.

On arrival at Thonje, we found a large number of patients collected there. This happened at every stage of our journey. Apart from the usual bruises, sprains and the like among our porters, Nanavati had to attend to these villagers, some of whom had complicated ailments of long duration, for which little could be done. Dispensing for these patients was difficult. Often Nanavati gave them appropriate remedies, but sometimes he distributed harmless vitamin pills, the effect of which was more psychological than medicinal. Jungalwala and Sonam were the usual interpreters, and they invariably succeeded in painting a rosy picture for every patient's benefit. This did as much good as Nanavati's potions.

A doctor's job with any mountaineering expedition is a fatiguing one, especially during the long marches. After a day's strenuous march, while others can relax in their tents, the poor doctor finds himself surrounded by patients calling for attention. Nanavati worked with missionary zeal. He was always on his toes. Of all his worries, the worst were his women patients, who would not allow themselves to be touched or examined by a doctor. At Thonje, the Gorkha soldier we had employed as our mail-runner implored Nanavati to examine his wife who had been ailing for some time past. The poor doctor made a four-mile climb of nearly 1,000 feet only to find the young woman refusing to let him come near her!

While Nanavati went about seeing his patients we spent a leisurely afternoon. In the evening, Shekhawat and I went out for a stroll. Walking through the village street we saw a crowd collected. A few round-faced, young Nepali girls, with colourful nose and ear-rings, jingling glass bangles and silver anklets and decked in all their finery, were chanting choruses. As we made our way through the merry crowd, we found Chaturvedi neatly settled down with his tape-recorder in the middle of the ring. Only the previous day, I had told Chaturvedi, how Rajinder Vikram Singh used to record folk music during the Everest Expedition. He had taken the

hint and, having made friends with the local villagers through the Sherpa interpreters, he had succeeded in collecting a band of young, enthusiastic artistes who were only too happy to oblige him, intrigued as they were with his "music box".

On the outskirts of the village, we found a saintly Lama seated calmly on a high dais inside a large hut. He was very old; his face was full of wrinkles, his head with matted grey hair and a thin wispy beard clung loosely to his drooping chin. He presented an impressive picture of holiness. Dressed in a long, flowing red gown and a high, conical cap, he radiated unusual spiritual warmth. His wife, too, had a kindly, gentle smile. There were hundreds of sacred books littered around him. We were unable to converse with him; but we were told



that he was a famous Lama from Tibet. A few days before, he had gone for an audience with the Dalai Lama and had just returned. We received his blessings, as also the smiles and blessings of his wife.

There were a number of Tibetan refugees in this area. A few of them wanted jobs with us; we recruited some as porters in place of those we had decided to turn back.

At Thonje, about midnight, the first March rains sent us scurrying into our large and comfortable mess tent. This provided us with one of the rare opportunities to be together as a team. Unfortunately, the tent leaked at one or two places. We huddled together to avoid the rain, using rain-coats, umbrellas and alkathene sheets, and kept moving our mattresses from where it dripped to dry patches.

It was still drizzling when we left camp the following morning. After an hour's march we entered the village of Begarchap. It had an impressive entrance gate with coloured chortens and a massive wall with delicate carvings on it. Such walls are called "Mane"; they are six to eight feet high, and are sacred to Buddhists. A passer-by should always keep to the left of them and must place a stone on top. There were a number of prayer wheels revolving merrily in the breeze and prayer flags fluttering from tall bamboo poles. Unlike the congested tenements of Thonje, the houses here were well-dispersed and had flat roofs of rammed earth.

The variety and richness of bird life in this region was a source of constant delight. Chaturvedi, a keen bird-watcher, pointed out to us a number of interesting birds and imitated their calls. We saw roller jays, red-vented bulbuls, pheasants, snow pigeons and many others of Nature's beautifully-feathered songsters.

We were now behind the main Himalayan axis and turned north-west. There was still a thin spray of rain when we reached the next stage and camped at Chhuterpu, a few miles short of Chame.

It was the first of April and Chaturvedi announced with aplomb that it was the I.A.F. anniversary day and that the "drinks"—consisting of the rather muddy spring water and tea, coffee, chocolate, or Horlicks, made from this same liquid—would be on him. Shekhawat, as quarter-master, presented

Chaturvedi with a bill for one day's rations. Chaturvedi, who is sparsely built, behaved in a manner befitting under-developed people, suggesting that the amount should be treated as technical aid from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation!

Next morning, we had hardly left our camp when Chaturvedi exclaimed, "Look, there". Shekhawat, who was close behind, rushed forward. "Fantastic," he said with a gasp. I made a dash for the spot. We were all transfixed with fear and bewilderment, not unmixed with a feeling of exultation. It was indeed an incredible spectacle, overwhelming us by its suddenness and massive, awe-inspiring grandeur. A stupendous white giant, dazzling and resplendent in the morning sun, loomed in front of us, silent and motionless. It was the great mountain Annapurna II. We could not see Annapurna III, which lay hidden behind, but here we were already face to face with the Annapurna massif.

A mile ahead lay Chame, a small, dismal hamlet. We were now at a height of 9,000 feet and our track was carpeted with pine needles. The Gompa in the village looked deserted; dead crows hung outside a few houses. We crossed the impetuous Marsyandi again and again, thrice within a mile.

Facing Pisang, there was a striking rock feature. It was incredible to find a smooth and glistening rock-face a mile wide and a thousand feet high. We felt an irresistible urge to climb it, but thought it wise to curb ourselves and push on.

We met a number of local women on their way to Bagarchap to collect buck-wheat flour. They shrieked, giggled and sniggered as they threw a ring around Sherpa Chhotare and teased him. Tauntingly they invited him to choose a wife for himself if he was not already married or else, they chirped, he would miss the bus for ever. When Chhotare ignored their baiting and buffoonery, they threatened to pin him to the ground! Poor Chhotare, who normally exhibits a keen sense of humour, was completely flabbergasted. Finally, however, he managed to come out unscathed.

A couple of miles ahead, we encountered a steep climb of over 1,000 feet that we had to negotiate to reach a pass. At the top, we were rewarded with a most welcome sight. "Look, there is Annapurna III," Jungalwala burst out. "Oh, no, it must be Annapurna I," Chaturvedi argued. "It is Annapurna



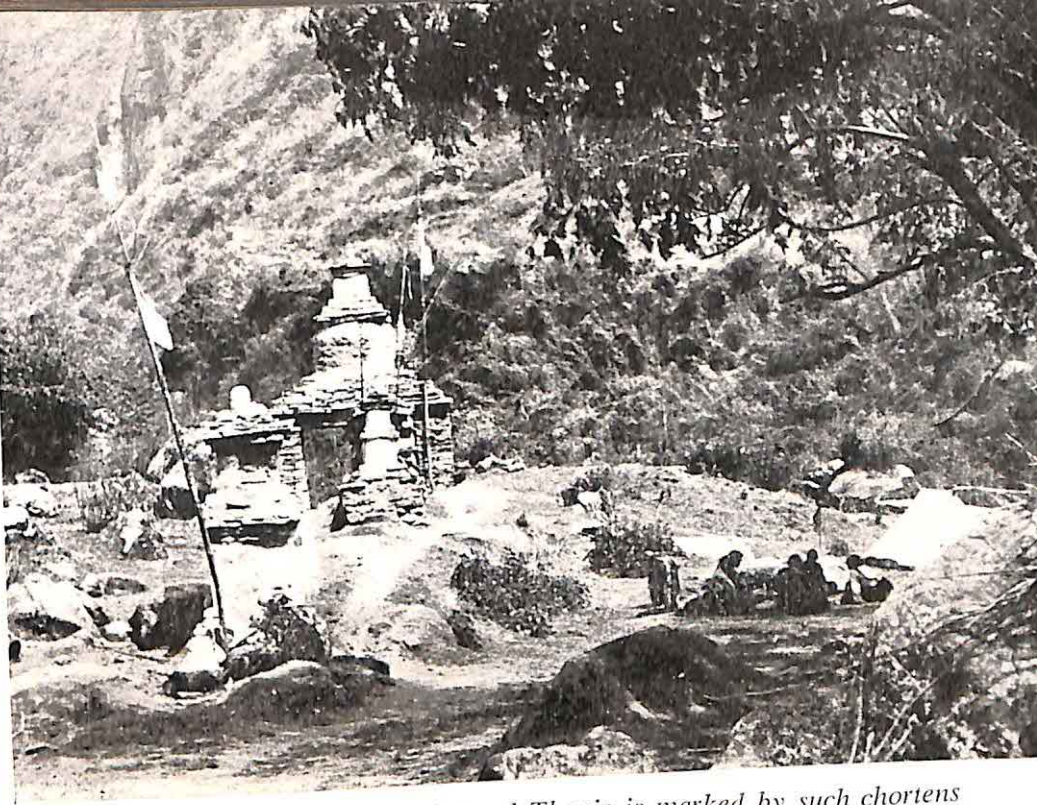
Beyond Thonje, the Buddhist influence was marked and there were many stones engraved with Buddhist 'mantras'

Members dining by the camp fire in the evening twilight





In Thonje village, the ground storey of the house is usually reserved for animals and knotted wooden trunks lead up to the first floor and into the second storey where the members of the household live



*The entrance to villages beyond Thonje is marked by such chortens
Some of the porters recruited at Thonje*





Tibetan refugee children

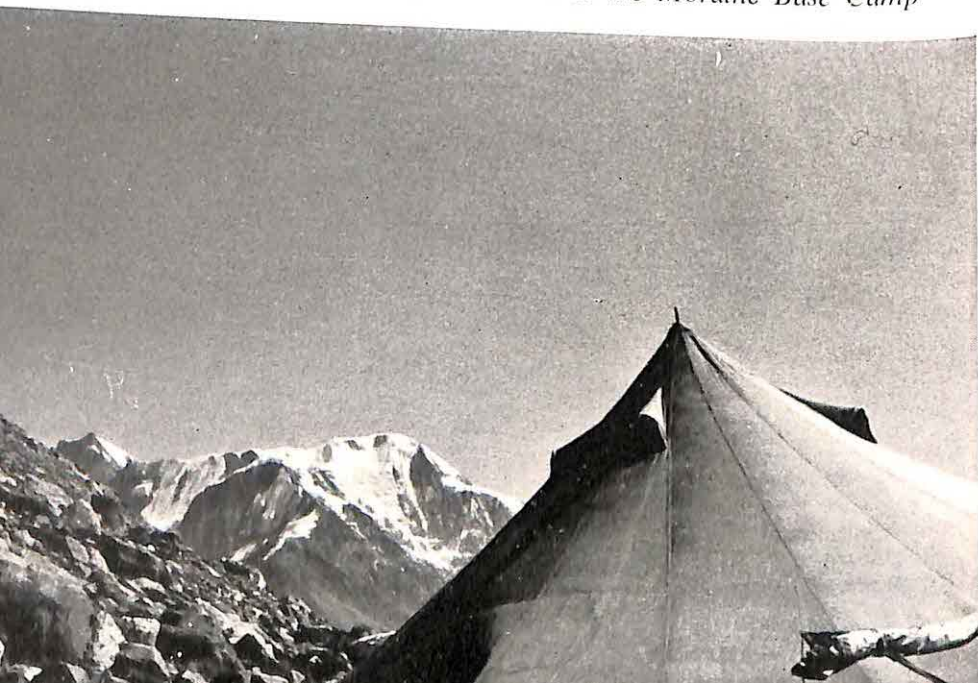
A Tibetan refugee belle





Moraine Base Camp

The roomy Mess tent at the Moraine Base Camp





The Manangbhot village





The Great North Ice Fall

III, but it can't be climbed," was my pessimistic rejoinder. "We might as well go back," Shekhawat concurred. Sonam was quiet, holding his peace.

Consulting our maps, we found that it was not Annapurna III, but the great barrier to the north of Annapurna I, described at length by Maurice Herzog in his exciting book. We breathed a sigh of relief.

We now entered the famous Manangbhot valley. The landscape was brown and bare, the plants were stunted, the soil cracked, sun-baked, and unfertile. It reminded me of the erstwhile North-West Frontier Province of India where I had spent sixteen early years of my life.

April 4 was the eleventh and last day of our march. The porters were now puffing and panting, and they could hardly keep warm in their scant clothing. With some difficulty, we were able to persuade them to bear with us a little longer.

Roberts had suggested a site a few miles beyond Manangbhot for our Base Camp. I sent Shekhawat and our cook Thondup to reconnoitre the area and choose a suitable site. The rest of us followed at a leisurely pace. When we reached Menang, we had the first glimpse of our mountain. The summit was veiled but the nasty ice-fall that Roberts had mentioned could be seen clearly like a giant finger, scintillating and quivering in the light. Excitement broke loose in the camp; all of us were buoyant and happy. From every possible vantage point, we feasted our eyes on Annapurna III, which rose like a celestial steple. Our hearts began to beat faster.

V HARASSMENT

SONAM and I went up the moraine of the Annapurna III ice-fall and found a nice spot for our Base Camp beside a pond. Shekhawat and Thondup were soon back too, after having discovered some good sites, but these had no water nearby. We accordingly decided to establish our Base Camp on this moraine, opposite the village of Manangbhot, at a height of 11,700 feet.

Everywhere, we had hitherto had a friendly and cheerful reception. But events were now to take an unhappy turn. From about the fourth day of our march, we had become conscious of sullen and sour looks. Certain Bhotias travelling by the same route seemed to resent our presence. They were unsavoury looking characters, with wild eyes and long matted hair, wearing loose garments and long boots. They jeered at us, behaved insolently and seemed determined to frustrate our plans. Sometimes they shouted rude remarks at us and questioned the purpose of our expedition.

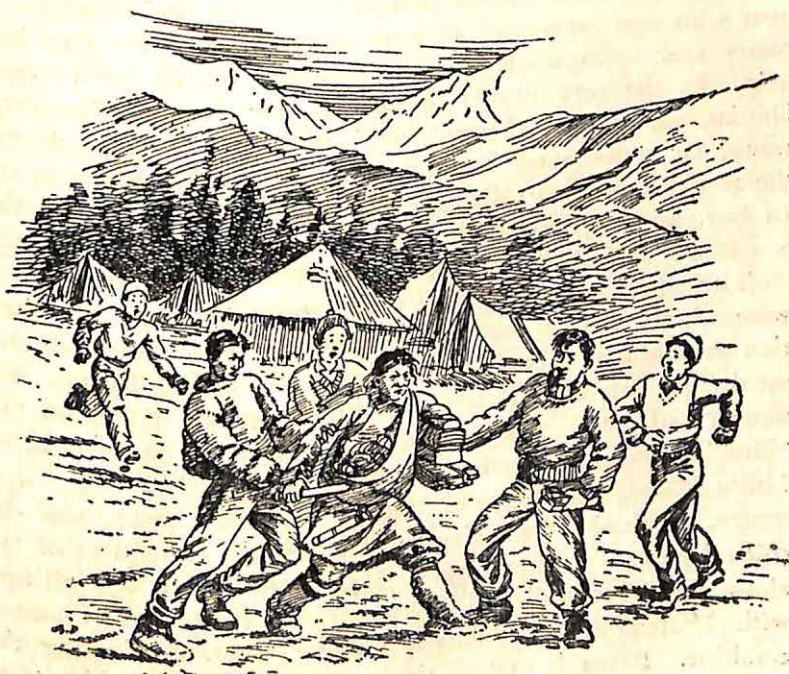
As we were then traversing what had been described as the most dangerous and difficult part of our route, we wondered whether we had, in our bravado, dismissed the dire warnings of "Our Man in Pokhra" a bit too lightly. The road was neither as difficult nor as dangerous as we had feared, but the attitude of the Bhotias whom we met, and whose territory we were about to enter, was ominous.

At Thonje, a signal was sent to India: "For Sarin from Kohli (.) Arrived Thonje today March 31 (.) Have encountered several groups of hostile people belonging to Manangbhot area mostly Bhotias who have threatened to prevent us from going beyond Manangbhot (.) Request that Nepalese Government be

approached for precautionary measures (.) Expedition scheduled to reach Manang April 4 (.) Liaison Officer sending similar message to Foreign Office." A similar message was dispatched to Mr. Inder Sen, First Secretary of our Embassy in Kathmandu. The Foreign Office in Nepal was approached immediately. Within a few hours, orders were received by the Thonje Check-post to dispatch a two-man escort for us but, unfortunately, these men were unarmed.

On the ninth day of our march, we camped on a plain outside the village of Braga. While we were pitching tents a number of strange urchins popped up from every side, eyeing our baggage with suspicious curiosity. In the evening, while Dr. Nanavati was attending to some patients in the camp, the same impish youngsters appeared once again, clamouring for medicines, making faces, pretending to be ill and then going into peals of laughter. We thought that they were, perhaps, just the kind of mischievous boys one might encounter anywhere.

In the middle of the night, two of our Sherpas heard strange



shuffling noises. It was discovered that the same set of boys were trying to pilfer our provisions. When one of them was caught, he whipped out a dagger, but was easily disarmed. (In this region, all males, even the smallest boys, carry daggers stuck under their waist-bands).

The altercation that followed woke us up. We decided to release the rascal after admonishing him, as it was hardly wise to create bad blood at this stage. Loudly protesting his innocence and howling all the while, the young wretch disappeared into the darkness. But soon we heard whistling sounds all round. It was obvious that we had been surrounded by the villagers who had instigated the boys to raid our camp and would have attacked us had we not freed the young miscreant. We waited fearfully for the worst, but the night passed without any further incident.

Next morning, some of us went to Braga village to lodge a complaint with the headman and to return the dagger which had been impounded from the boy. Sonam brought along with him from Braga an old Bhotia whom he called his "meet" (friend). He was confident that this lean "Dheba" (headman), bent with age, who was for ever counting the beads of his rosary and manipulating a prayer wheel, would be a great help. In the early stages of our trouble with the Manang-bhotias, we relied on our "meet", sure that his venerability would be of some use to us. But it did not take Sonam or the rest of us long to discover that this old man was a crook. In fact, we later realised that he was our biggest enemy and was double-crossing us. We were glad to get rid of him.

The Bhotias of this area were mostly Gurungs, but they were wholly unlike the famous Gurungs who have a reputation as soldiers. Though the Bhotias resemble Tibetans and speak one of the Tibetan dialects, they are not from the same racial stock. Their village names usually bear the suffix "Bhot" to indicate that it is a Bhotia village—Manangbhot and Mustangbhot, for example. Living in areas remote from the centre, they enjoy some degree of autonomy in matters of tax collection and trading rights. We learnt that a few villages along the Marsyandi valley are joined in a kind of league with Manangbhot, the largest among them, dominating the combine. Braga is one of these villages. The inhabitants of

this village have their own tribunal, presided over by five headmen, or "Dhebas", who sit on a raised platform when the council is in session. The town meetings, attended by all adult men and women, are usually very boisterous, 'chang' (rice alcohol) is served freely, and the meetings often terminate in the early hours of the morning in drunken brawls.

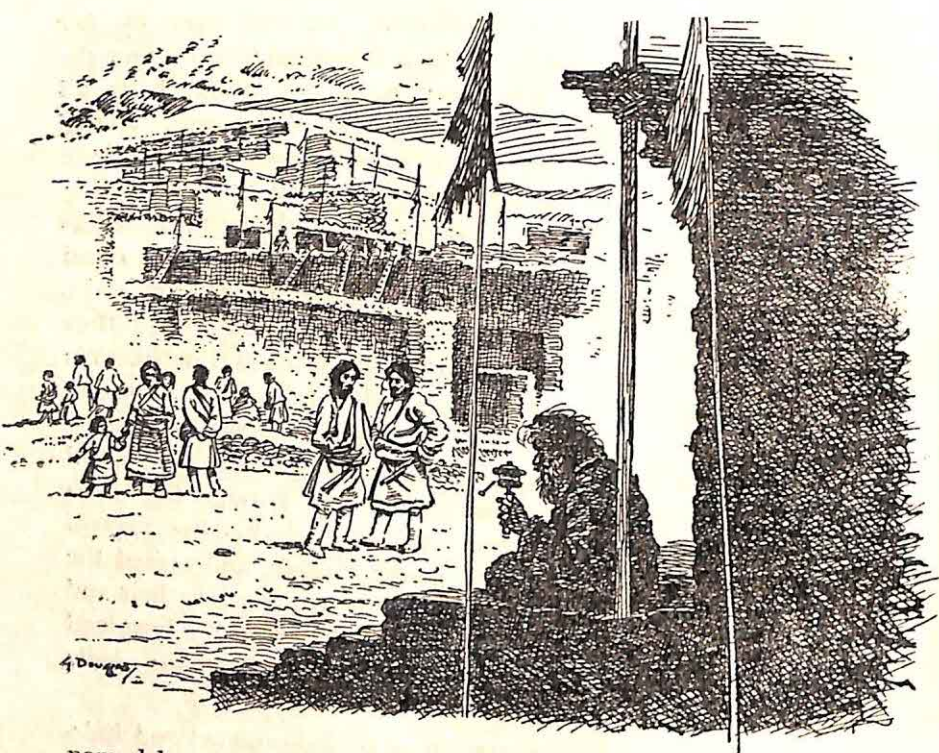
Most of these Bhotias are adventurous traders and travellers who go to Tibet for salt and wool, taking Indian textiles and other consumer goods in exchange. Their business activities extend as far as Burma, Malaya and Singapore, where they go to sell semi-precious stones, curios and medicinal herbs. We saw a number of Bhotias with sparkling gold teeth, Japanese and Singapore printed scarves, ready-made crepe-soled shoes—albeit without laces—Singapore and Hong Kong shirts and jackets with zips. Pictures of Indian and Foreign film stars and pin-up girls hung on the walls of many houses. Several of them had been to Amritsar, in the Punjab, and visited the famous Golden Temple. I noticed some wearing long hair and beards, as also the Sikh "kara" (steel bangle), and I imagined that they would be happy to meet me. But I was sadly mistaken.

Physically tough and well-built, with an untamed and independent nature, the only authority that they recognised, however nebulous it might be, was that of the "Dhebas in Council". The Dhebas as individuals, however, enjoyed no special respect and could be removed or substituted at the capricious will of the people.

Three of the Sherpas who had accompanied previous expeditions in this area recounted with dismay how the teams had been harassed and held to ransom by these Bhotias.

On April 4, when we had finished our day's work at the newly established Base Camp, we went to Manangbhot village, accompanied by our liaison officer, to make a peace call. We wanted to meet the Headman but were informed that there were five such dignitaries. The more the merrier, we thought, and said that we would meet all five of them. We were then told that all five had been called out suddenly on some important business. It was clear that they were deliberately avoiding us.

Eventually, we met a certain "Mr. Checkshirt" (so nick-



named by us as he always sported the same flamboyant checked shirt) who offered to conduct us to the residence of one of the Dhebas. He was completely sozzled with chang and wobbled along crookedly, teasing the girls as he crossed narrow lanes. At times, he would get fresh with us and break into foul language. But he failed to ruffle our tempers. Later, we learnt that he had recently been released from jail where he had served a sentence for murder. He was evidently playing the fool with us. After two hours of aimless wandering through fields and winding lanes, we gave up and returned to camp without meeting the Headman.

We had to go ahead with our programme of reconnaissance and acclimatization. But we were not left in peace. Some belligerent-looking Bhotias (of whom Mr. Checkshirt was the most prominent) and unruly bands of apish urchins haunted the camp almost every day, demanding tea, sweets and food, and looking for opportunities to steal.

A few days later, we were peremptorily summoned to meet

the village headmen. At this meeting, we were accused of camping on sacred ground and defiling it by our presence. Hidden in the glacier, they claimed, was a divine spring at which a "white lion" came to drink, and it was a hallowed spot much frequented by saintly Lamas. Vacate the place forthwith, came the menacing order. Luckily for us, this site was not too suitable for our climb and we had already been looking for a better one. We readily agreed to shift, assuring the villagers that whatever was holy to them was equally holy to us. We asked them, however, for three or four days' time to enable us to make arrangements for the move. The headmen were apparently satisfied and promised to provide us with a sufficient number of porters for the transfer.

Having selected a more suitable location, and a prettier one too, we changed over to our new Base Camp on April 11. Our troubles, however, were far from over. No sooner had we unloaded our equipment at the new Base Camp ground than one of the Dheba's sons, who was acting as chief agent for the porters, raised an angry protest that the new site was also holy ground. We dismissed his cavilling as blackmail, and promised to discuss the matter with the headmen personally. We did not anticipate any trouble as our previous discussions had seemed very cordial. Besides, the village had made nearly a thousand rupees out of us by way of portage charges.

We settled down at this beautiful site, secure in the belief that we had seen the end of our sorrows. Time, however, proved that our optimism was completely unfounded.



VI LOOKING FOR A WAY

PROBING gaunt heights unknown to man, prying into every nook and cranny; seeking a clue to a world yet untrodden by any living being, is an adventure as full of excitement as of risks. The thrill of the quest is equalled only by the chaste exaltation of standing on the crest of a mountain.

On the day we established our Base Camp we saw a magnificent ice-fall, which we christened the Great North Ice-fall. The ice-fall ended only a few feet beyond where we had pitched our tents. This mammoth river of ice had sent our blood coursing rapidly through our veins. Annapura III was hidden behind a peak about 19,000 feet high which we named the Base Camp Peak. Exploring the area for a good camp site, Sonam and I went right up to the foot of the ice-fall but, being too close to it, we had been unable to make an assessment of its nature or its total length.

In the evening, when we were assembled in the mess tent, everyone bubbled over with excitement. All our thoughts and words centred on the Great North Ice-fall. We had looked on nature in violent chaos. As the ice cascaded down a tremendous slope; it broke into a myriad wild geometrical patterns. There were seracs and crevasses of a thousand different kinds, broken, jagged pieces of ice and smooth slopes. In fact, it appeared as if a colossal mirror had been shattered by an angry blow and its silvery fragments lay scattered and uncollected. Sharma light-heartedly suggested that he would go out into the night with some Sherpas and a few torches to discover a route through the ice-fall. Perhaps, we thought, the only thing to do was to force a way through this crumpled mass of glittering ice. We knew of no other approach and



The friendly Bhotias of Khangsar village



The Manangbhot memsahibs



A member feasting his eyes on the panorama of the Annapurna range and the Manangbhot valley during acclimatisation

On the top left is Annapurna II and in the middle is Annapurna I





Annapurna III seen from the acclimatisation camp

we saw little hope elsewhere. At least, that is what we felt that evening. But when we heard the muffled rumbling and crashing of avalanches, intermittently throughout the night, we began to wonder whether a safe route did exist through the ice-fall.

The next day we relaxed. Having marched continuously for the past eleven days, we badly needed some rest. Most of us spent the day in writing letters. It snowed in the afternoon but towards the evening the weather cleared up.

The following day, April 6, we commenced our reconnaissance programme. Our plan was to spread out in small parties and climb peaks 15,000 to 16,000 feet high, both to acclimatize ourselves as well as to obtain a close glimpse of the mountain from various angles, and discover, maybe, a route to the summit.

We had a photograph of Annapurna III taken by Roberts in 1960. This made it clear that there was a huge shelf at a height of about 21,000 ft., beyond which there did not seem to be any major obstacles. The object of our reconnaissance, therefore, was to look for a way to the North Shelf. Jungalwala and Sharma went up a peak approximately 15,500 ft. high next to the Base Camp facing the ice-fall, while Shekhwat, accompanied by a Sherpa, climbed another peak rising behind the village of Manangbhot. The rest of us stayed back at the Base Camp waiting for a party of local Bhotias who were said to be on their way to meet us. We waited all day long, but no one showed up.

The reconnaissance parties returned in the afternoon. They had reached the chosen peaks but, owing to bad weather, had been unable to see the mountain. Sharma and Jungalwala, who had experienced slightly better conditions, did not seem to feel that the ice-fall would be easy to tackle.

On the third day of our "Operation Search", Sonam and I, with two Sherpas, went to a peak 15,500 ft. high, to the north-west of Annapurna III. Half-way between Manangbhot and Khangsar, we crossed the Marsyandi, climbing on to a steep ridge of loose mud and rock. With difficulty we reached the top, only to find that Annapurna III was not visible from there. We retraced our steps to the Marsyandi and thence skirted round the ridge to get on to the other side. Sonam, however, did not join us; he had decided to clamber down the

other face of the false ridge. We lost sight of him for a while and eventually found him clinging for life to a precipitous slope. He had got stuck 150 feet above us. He could neither go up, nor did he appear to be moving down; there he was, poised precariously between heaven and earth, not knowing what to do. He gave us many anxious moments as we tried to guide him from below. Ultimately, he threw away his ice-axe and made his way down with the consummate skill of a rock-lizard. We were deeply impressed with his superb performance, as well as his incredible courage and presence of mind.

We now got on to another ridge where we could push ahead more speedily. The route lay through prickly bushes and about midday we attained our objective. Looming in front of us was Annapurna III, gleaming and shimmering in the clear, lambent light. Its imponderable, immense spangle stood out between Annapurna I and Annapurna II. The pronounced simplicity of our mountain added to its greatness. Annapurna II was higher than Annapurna III, but it seemed to shrink into insignificance beside the latter's noble grace and elegance.

Peering through binoculars, we scrutinised the ice-fall. It looked monstrous. Commencing a little below the North Shelf, at a dizzy height of 20,000 feet, this massive frozen sheet of ice and snow dropped down, broken and battered, in a frenzy, to nearly 12,000 feet. It would have been suicidal to negotiate the 8,000 feet of this treacherous ice-fall, almost four times longer than the well-known Khumbu Ice-fall of Everest.

Surveying the area to the east of the Great North Ice-fall, we noticed that between the North Shelf and the Base Camp Peak was a Col at a height of 18,000 to 19,000 feet. We called this the East Col. Above this Col were a series of ice-terraces, formidable in appearance but seemingly negotiable. With our binoculars trained on the mountain, we checked and rechecked the route beyond the East Col. It was agreed that once we reached this Col, the rest would be easy.

But how were we to reach this Col? The fate of our expedition hung on the answer, which was not easy to formulate, especially as what lay on the other side was completely hidden from our view. Sharma and Shekhawat had gone down the

Marsyandi to a peak above the Braga village north-east of Annapurna III, looking for an approach. "But, surely, Shekhawat and Sharma should be able to see the route," Sonam suggested hopefully.

By prior arrangement, at 1 p.m., we made wireless contact on the walkie-talkie set with Shekhawat and Sharma.

"We have found the route beyond the East Col. Can you see a Col between an ice dome and the Base Camp Peak?"

"I can see the ice dome, but can't see the Base Camp Peak, and there is no Col."

"Hello Shekhawat, I get you. But what do you see a little to the right of this dome?"

"Well, there are some gendarmes and there is an ice-fall just below them."

"Is this ice-fall negotiable?"

"Yes."

Later, comparing notes, we found that from the north-east of Annapurna III, the Base Camp Peak, being lower than the Shelf, appeared to merge with the Shelf itself. The view that Sharma and Shekhawat had obtained of the mountain was totally different from the one to be had from our side. Whereas we could see the East Col clearly, Sharma and Shekhawat could not locate it. Nevertheless, it was encouraging to learn that the East Ice-fall, as they christened the one they had seen, appeared negotiable. We were now getting somewhere. Nanavati and Chaturvedi had also climbed that day to a height of 14,500 feet. This was Nanavati's first climbing experience. By 4-30 p.m. every one was back in camp.

Tea was served with delicious pancakes made by Thondup, and jam and honey too. Soon after tea we had a conference to discuss the various approaches. Shekhawat and Sharma had made sketches of what they had seen and we compared them with our own drawings. Their sketches were so different from ours that it was not possible for one side to appreciate the other's point of view. The mountain had beaten us with its diverse facets.

"What lies beyond the ice-fall?", Sonam and I enquired of Shekhawat and Sharma. "Can one get on to the west of the ice-dome?"

"I think so," replied Shekhawat.

"But there is a steep rock and surely that does not seem climbable", Sharma interjected.

Sonam and I had also seen this rock buttress, a little short of the East Col, and no route appeared possible through it. If at all, a way had to be found somewhere below it. The more we discussed the matter the more confused we became. We decided that another good look from the north-east of the mountain was essential.

We had planned to take it easy next day, but instead of relaxing, we had to sort out our trouble with the Sherpas who, once again, raised the question of hire charges for their equipment. This was wholly unwarranted, for we had already promised to pay them more than the rates prescribed by the Himalayan Society.

Sherpas are an indispensable part of every Himalayan expedition. They take to the mountains like ducks to water. Their determination, endurance and physical strength have become by-words in mountaineering. They have made an invaluable contribution to every expedition. No mountaineering team can go very far into the Himalayas without their help. They are not only acquainted with the labyrinthine mountain tracks, the terrain and its hazards, but have, on many occasions, also climbed with heavy loads to very high altitudes, keeping pace with the pick of the team.

Although some Garhwalis and Kumaonis have of late proved their worth as high-altitude porters, they can hardly match the Sherpas. The Sherpas, conscious of their indispensability are, like all human beings, prone to exploit this advantage, extract the best possible terms and the maximum benefits.

Our Sherpas, disregarding the rules of the Himalayan Society, were not prepared to accept less than Rs. 100 per month in lieu of their equipment. We thought it wiser to accept this demand than to abandon our expedition. Besides, on our own, we agreed to let them retain a few items of personal clothing. The Sherpas, on their part, readily responded to this generous treatment, reciprocating with warmth and loyalty. They worked to the best of their ability and we never had any further grounds for complaint.

On the fourth day of our reconnaissance, while Sonam and Shekhawat went west to have a last look at the Great North

Ice-fall, the rest of us proceeded east. Keeping our fingers crossed, we walked down the Marsyandi and within half an hour reached Braga. We followed the same route as Sharma and Shekhawat had taken two days earlier. We soon reached a point from where we could see the East Col. The soft snow slope leading to the East Col was steep, but appeared feasible. We had at last found a way! It is impossible to describe our ecstasy.

The only pair of binoculars we possessed was passed from hand to hand in a fever of excitement. We hopped and skipped, like twittering, carefree birds. "What luck! What luck!" Our gaze was fixed on the East Ice-fall and what lay beyond it. The route was now quite clear and the most convenient starting point seemed to be the flat portion of the ridge right in front of us, across the Marsyandi. It seemed an ideal spot for our Base Camp but to get a clear picture we continued our climb.

We had hardly gone 50 yards ahead when we heard some villagers from Braga shouting at us. I could not make out what it was that excited them but Sonam Girmi, who was close behind me, thought that the villagers wanted us to come down. We paused to make sure. The crowd soon began to swell, more and more people came out of their houses to join the screaming mob. We descended to meet them.

"You can't climb this ridge", the villagers protested indignantly. "It is holy ground. The Manangbhot people will punish us if they got to learn that we allowed you to climb here."

We understood what they wanted. They were really scared of the Manangbhotias, who had, on several occasions, punished them severely even on flimsy excuses.

We left the village immediately and decided to negotiate the ridge opposite where we expected to find a suitable site for our new Base Camp. It took us about an hour to reach the top which was densely forested with fir, pine and birch trees. A small water trickle nearby was adequate for our requirements.

In our exhilaration we climbed another 2,000 feet but failed to get a good view of the East Ice-fall. By now we were tired and decided to head straight for the Base Camp, by a different route along the ridge, avoiding the descent to the

Marsyandi. But on reaching the edge overlooking the Base Camp, we discovered that we were at a dead end. The sheer fall to the moraine below seemed most tricky. As we sat back pondering over the problem before us, we saw our Assistant Sardar, Chhotare, sliding quietly down the steep, muddy ridge. We watched his nimble movements in astonished admiration; soon he was down on his feet in the moraine. Here was an example for us to follow. Copying his methods, we reached the moraine without a mishap. Some of us did slip here and there but no one was hurt.

Beaming with pride and joy, we came to the Base Camp to inform everyone that we had found the way to the summit. Shekhawat and Sonam also returned after a last look at the ice-fall, which, they felt, was very dangerous. We celebrated our success in a befitting manner, everyone in the camp, Sherpas and Nepali porters included, joining in.

The arrival of our mail runner, Devi Dayal, added much zest to our evening festivities. The mail bag brought a message from the Sponsoring Committee, which had been transmitted by wireless to the Thonje Check-post. It read, "From Sarin for Kohli (,) Sponsoring Committee gratified to learn of good progress made so far and have asked me to send you and members of your expedition their best wishes for the success of the expedition (,)"

That night we all dreamed of the summit.

VII

MANANGBHOT MEMSAHIBS

THE need for systematic acclimatization in a mountaineering expedition cannot be over-emphasized. Our experience with the Indian Everest Expedition had convinced us of the cardinal importance of gradual and methodical conditioning of mind and body to high altitudes. Physiological changes begin to occur in the human body after a height of 12,000 feet or so and unless one systematically acclimatizes oneself, they manifest themselves in various forms, for example, acute headaches, nausea, giddiness, loss of appetite, sleeplessness and general lassitude.

It has been generally accepted, in the light of past experience, that a human being can progressively acclimatize himself to live and work up to 22,000 feet; physiological laboratory tests also suggest a similar "ceiling", though large individual variations are known to exist. Sir Edmund Hillary, during his expedition to Makalu in 1961, carried a team of experts to investigate this ceiling and to discover whether it could, in any way, be raised. The results are awaited with great interest.

These physiological and psychological changes have been explained vividly by James Ramsey Ullman in his book, "The Age of Mountaineering": "On the one hand, a man must undergo a period of gradual acclimatization before his organs can operate properly at great heights; but on the other, it has been found that if he spends too long a time in a rarefied atmosphere, serious bodily deterioration sets in. Individuals vary greatly in their speed and degree of acclimatization, and neither age, strength nor general physical condition has proved a particularly reliable criterion of performance. Even more unpredictable are the mental reactions of men

transplanted from their natural lowland habitat to the bitter, almost airless heights of the sub-stratosphere. Perception becomes dulled, judgments faulty, emotions unstable, the will atrophied; and extinction itself sometimes seems preferable to the next gasping, stumbling step."

Our acclimatization programme was spread out in two stages. We had already completed the first phase while conducting our reconnaissance climbs in small groups. Members and Sherpas had got up to surrounding peaks of 15,000 to 16,000 feet, returning each day to the camp for rest and sleep.

I was happy to see Dr. Nanavati, who was new to mountaineering, joining us in these climbs, and though he did find them a bit more strenuous than the others, he was rapidly getting used to altitude. Sonam, Jungalwala and I, the three Everesters, who had been up to a height of 26,000 feet or more in the previous year, responded to altitude better than others. Possibly the benefits of acclimatization persist as long as a year or more.

An ancillary benefit of acclimatization is that during this period the team is knit closer together, with every one getting to know each other better. It was gratifying to see the bonds of friendship strengthening among the members and between the team on the one side and the Sherpas on the other.

Despite the long approach march and the acclimatization training, we maintained our body weight and the health of every member was satisfactory. Some of us had actually put on weight and this was, perhaps, due to our increased appetite and, no doubt, the delicious meals that Thondup served us. Resourceful Sonam Gyatso, with his magic ways, was always procuring fresh meat in spite of the non-co-operation of the Manangbhotias, who refused to sell us anything.

After completing the first period of acclimatization, we had a day's rest at the Moraine Base Camp to finalise arrangements for shifting our Base Camp to the new site that had been selected. It was decided that on April 11, Sonam, Jungalwala, Nanavati and Sharma should supervise the transportation of our stores and equipment to the new camp, while Chaturvedi, Shekhawat and I, with four Sherpas—Chhotare, Nima Tenzing, Jamal Tenzing and Dhanu (the assistant cook)—would start on the second phase of acclimatization.



The Manangbhot valley looks enchanting from the Base Camp



The new Base Camp wore a White Christmas look after a heavy snowfall





Camp I (15,400 ft.)

Porters had been recruited from the Manang village, though not without apprehension. The operation had been organized through four agents—sturdy Bhotias, who demanded, and were given, a fat commission.

The crackling noise of stones and pebbles rolling down and loud, unruly voices, mixed with shrill feminine notes, awakened us early on the morning of April 11. The porters from Manang had arrived two hours too early! There was always a general sense of insecurity during a visitation from the rough Bhotias of Manang. There was no knowing what they would do. We tumbled out of our sleeping bags as fast as we could; Jungalwala with his stentorian voice and Sonam with his persuasive manner managed to produce a semblance of order, keeping the turbulent mob at a safe distance.

We had a hurried breakfast and distributed the loads among the porters—mostly women and children. All the baggage lifted, the motley procession wound its way across the boulder-strewn moraine under the anxious and watchful eyes of an escorting party.



Meanwhile, Chaturvedi and Shekhawat collected food and equipment for our four-day acclimatization programme. Chhotare—married as many as seven times, but still with a roving eye—selected four of the best-looking women porters to accompany us on our acclimatization march. He carefully negotiated terms with them, leaving nothing to chance.

Four Sherpas and our women porters set off westward along the right bank of the Marsyandi with Chaturvedi and Shekhawat. I followed half an hour later. We were glad to get out of this area where our nerves had been frayed with constant fear of trouble.

Leaving the rubble and chaos of the moraine behind, we trekked through a lovely valley, broad and level, the upper reaches of which were thickly covered with tall, strong pine and fir trees swaying merrily in the wind. The floor of the valley was bare, strewn with smooth stones and multi-coloured pebbles over which the slate-grey Marsyandi had rolled and rolled through the ages.

A couple of miles beyond, crossing over to the left bank of the river, we went up a gradual ascent leading to the village of Ngachi, a thousand feet above the Marsyandi, which was wrongly marked as Khangsar on our map. The residents of this village, also Bhotias and much like the Manangbhotias, in other respects, were however, a friendly lot. They shook their heads at our folly in wanting to venture into the snows (Him) and repeatedly remarked commiseratingly, "*Timi marcha*" ("You will die"). Our porters had relatives and acquaintances in the village; they kept disappearing into various houses for a friendly chat or just an exchange of greetings. As we waited in the village square, leaning on our ice-axes, the low roof-tops were crowded with curious villagers who had come out to gaze upon the foolhardy strangers bound for the snows, which to them meant certain death.

Our porters were all young and attractive girls in their early twenties. Some of the local youth made passes at them, bantering and joking, warning them of the horrible death that awaited them in the snows. The raillery had the desired effect; the girls put down their loads, complaining that they were too exhausted to go any farther. On this, the young boys cheered and applauded them. But Chhotare came out

with a few sharp, uncomplimentary words; the girls promptly picked up their loads and recommenced the uphill march out of the village. They walked hesitatingly, with faltering steps, spinning the prayer wheels set up near the exit gates as they emerged from Ngachi.

A gradual climb of 1,000 feet brought us to a large meadow nestling in the deep shadows of a hill. This seemed a good site for a camp, but at first we did not find any water. A further search, however, revealed a muddy rivulet a hundred yards away and without further ado, we pitched camp.

Shekhawat summoned the girl porters to pay them off as they had been engaged to accompany us only as far as Khangsar. Fearing that we might have some difficulty in engaging new porters for the next day's march, Shekhawat jokingly asked Midula, the eldest of the girls (she was 22 years old by her own reckoning)—who could understand and speak broken Hindustani—if they would like to work for all the four days of the trip. We would give them each 20 Nepali rupees, but they would have to provide for their own food and shelter.

We were pleasantly surprised when, after a few minutes of consultation among themselves, they came back with cheerful faces to say that they would accept the offer. Shekhawat asked, 'Won't your folks at home be worried? They don't expect you to be away for another four days? And what will you do for food?' Midula answered in hardly intelligible Hindustani with an air of innocence, "Mengu (one of the girls) has a sister in Ngachi. She will give us food and clothing. And when we produce 20 rupees for each day our people at home will not be angry!"

Midula, accompanied by another girl, went off to get food and clothing, while the other two sat by the fire watching us setting up camp.

Midula returned with food for all the four girls but she brought no clothes. "We don't feel cold," she observed with a smile.

We offered them a tent and Chhotare and Dhanu, who had been deprived of one, gallantly offered to sleep in the open, under a tarpaulin.

The following morning, there was bright sunshine; the sky was blue—the deep blue of the mountains—when we moved

farther west, camping at 16,000 feet. There was no vegetation and we had to get yak dung and juniper from the lower regions to light a fire. There were many patches of melting spring snow and one such patch, turning into a large 'pokhri', provided us with water.

At 5-45 p.m. we made our routine wireless call to the new Base Camp and were surprised to hear them clearly over a distance of nearly eight miles—a performance we had not expected from our walkie-talkie sets. Sonam spoke from the other end and related the harrowing experience of shifting the Base Camp with the aid of our Bhotia friends! He ended his transmission with his familiar booming, "Over to you", Shekhawat's persistent effort to teach him the standard Naval communication procedure, which should end with a simple "over", was lost on the flamboyant Sonam, who continued to terminate his messages with a flourish, "Over to you."

On April 13, we set out at 7 a.m. to attempt a peak we had seen the day before, leaving instructions with Dhanu to move our camp a mile or so down on the return route, near a 'khola' (stream) which we had crossed while coming up. Climbing a steep hill above the camp, we traversed a vast scree slope which gave access to a rocky Col. It did not seem far and we expected to make it in an hour or so; but after three hours we were still struggling, so illusory are heights and distances in the crystal clear air of the mountains. The scree slid away all the time. After four and a half hours of battling, we gained the Col, at a height of 18,000 feet, only to find, to our dismay, a sheer 3,000-foot drop into a vast valley.

Again the peak seemed to be wholly inaccessible. We looked at one another in silence. In any case, we knew that that was the end of our day's climbing. Moving on to the highest point of the ridge, we built a cairn with the laminated slate of the mountain and, in the radiant sunshine, lazily surveyed the massive sweep of the Annapurna uplift, which spread before us like a gigantic cinemascope screen—from Annapurna I in the west to Annapurna II in the east, with our own Annapurna III adorning the centre of the screen.

After spending a leisurely hour eating, dozing and talking, we came racing down rapidly to our camp. The "Manang Memsahibs", as the Sherpas sarcastically called our girl porters,

greeted us with pleasant smiles. They had spent the day in washing their clothes and scrubbing their faces with a piece of soap generously given them by Chaturvedi.

Our "Manang Memsahibs", true daughters of the mountains, were as lustrous and scintillating as the Himalayas themselves. They were quite different from the people we had met at Manang.

Always smiling and cheerful, they exuded a welcome warmth in the cold mountain surroundings. Midula was a fair, buxom, moon-faced girl with beautiful white teeth which sparkled every time she laughed or giggled. She had travelled as far as Calcutta and could speak broken Hindustani, though with some difficulty. As the other girls did not understand our language, Midula was always in demand as an interpreter.

Mengu, about the same age as Midula, had a slim, petite figure and a soft, shy smile. Properly dressed in smart clothes, she would shine in the most sophisticated social circle.

Ishikhanda, twenty years old, was a reserved type, almost a recluse. She was plain-looking, and most of the time kept to herself, praying and counting her beads. She understood neither Hindustani nor our inadequate Nepali. She did not seem much interested in the world around her.

Tsyangi, sister of Mengu and two years younger than her, was a bright spark. Though not as attractive as Mengu, she was vivacious, alert, intelligent and endowed with an impish sense of humour. She picked up enough Hindustani to be able to converse with us. She learned our names and coined her own versions: I was "Burra Sab", Chaturvedi was "Chaturbhai" and Shekhawat, "Viju Bhai". Whenever we had camp fires in the evening, she would take our damp and wet socks from the ice-axes where the Sherpas hung them and dry them by the fire.

The "Manang Memsahibs" sat in their tent and watched intently as we washed our faces and brushed our teeth. It was soon evident that they had profited from our example, for they trooped off silently to a nearby stream and emerged, after a little while, with shining faces. Here, indeed, was a major concession to us. "Chaturbhai" gave them a piece of soap and, thereafter, we never saw a dirty face. Given a good

environment and educational facilities, these smart girls would certainly do well for themselves.

In the evening, we lit a camp fire. The "Manang Mem-sahibs" and our Sherpas danced with vigour and sang folk songs, both dolorous and joyous. We spent a delectable evening watching the rich, colourful performance. The girls danced with professional perfection, holding one another by their aprons in the traditional Nepali style. Their movements were precise; their bodies, waist upwards, remained rigid while their hips and legs swayed in ecstasy and their feet beat a rhythmic tattoo to the dulcet lilt of the songs. They danced for a long time till the fire had completely died down. This wonderful evening marked the end of the second phase of our acclimatization.

On April 14, when we returned to the Base Camp, we reluctantly took leave of the "Manang Memsahibs", giving each of them three extra rupees. Midula, Mengu and Ishikhanda shook hands with the Sherpas, then went down the hill and disappeared in the pine forest. They did not look back!

VIII

THE EAST COL

THERE was panic in the middle of the night. Shouts and squeals disturbed my sleep: "Hold it, it is falling," someone was shouting. "For God's sake, let us get out," came Jungalwala's excited voice. I was a little startled. But as I opened the zip of my small Meade tent, loud guffaws came from the mess tent. I could hear Sonam Gyatso saying, "I have put the pole right, it won't fall now." Obviously, the central pole of the mess tent had given way under a mass of fresh snow. It was not surprising, for snow had been falling incessantly.

I pulled back the zip of my sleeping bag, snuggling into its warmth, to snatch a few more hours' sleep. When I got up, it was past seven. Fresh snow, soft, velvety and white, had piled up in shimmering mounds round my tent. It had been snowing the whole night. But the morning was clear and bright, though clouds were still floating all round the mountains. Our camp presented the spectacle of a white Christmas. We could not have chosen a more beautiful spot, nor one more favourably situated for the climb.

According to plan, Sonam, Jungalwala and Sharma had to move up that day, but owing to bad weather, they were unable to set out till the afternoon. Accompanied by Sherpa Sardar, Sonam Girmi, Ang Tshering and Dhanu, they left for Camp I, which they reached after nearly three hours of tiresome climbing. Since they had already climbed beyond Camp I during their second phase of acclimatization, they were familiar with the terrain. They established Camp I and retired for the day. Next day, they turned their attention to the East Ice-fall which did not present many obstacles except that the snow

was soft and deep and the going was difficult. Towards the end, they encountered a precipitous snow-ridge with an incline of over 60 degrees. Here they fixed a rope line to help the Sherpas and other members up. On top of the ridge, under the protective covering of an immense rock face, they succeeded in establishing Camp II, at a height of 17,400 feet. Pushing forward, they had hardly gone a few hundred feet when the weather deteriorated suddenly, forcing them to turn back. Dumping their loads at Camp II they made a quick descent to Camp I and the following day, returned to the Base Camp.

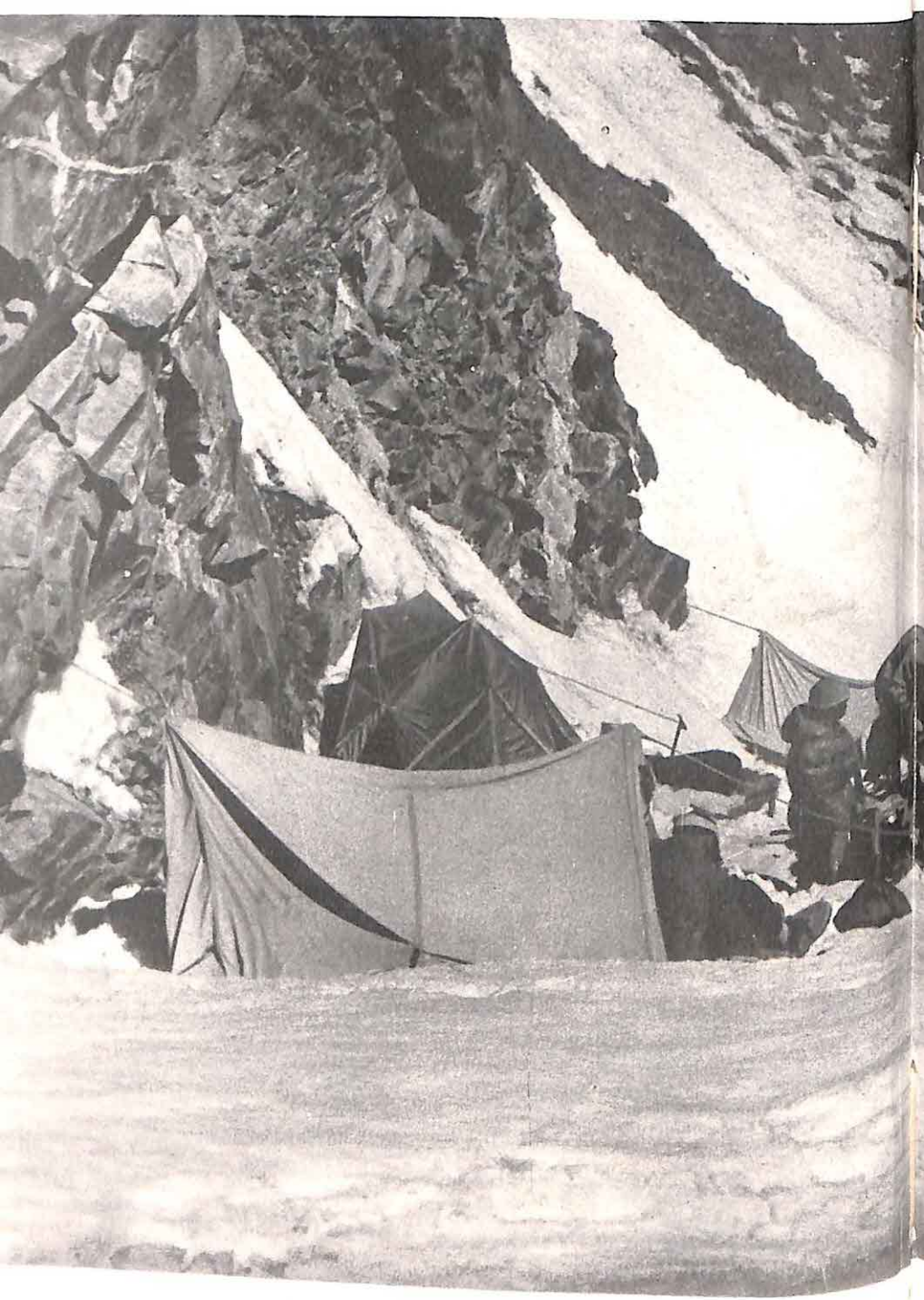
April 17 was the first day of the Sherpa month. Our head cook, Thondup, and the other Sherpas hoisted Buddhist prayer flags amidst rejoicings. It is believed that the prayers inscribed on these flags are wafted to the Almighty by the wind.

Sonam, Jungalwala and Sharma arrived in time to join us at lunch. Shekhawat, Chaturvedi and myself, who were to relieve the first party, left for Camp I in the afternoon. In spite of our thick woollen trousers and the gaiters protecting the ankles, we were scratched by thorns and bramble. Each one of us carried from 40 to 50 lbs. in our rucksacks, which slowed down our progress. The sun was setting in a blaze of red and gold behind the great barrier of Annapurna I when we reached our camp. It was very cold, an incisive wind had set in. We had early supper and gratefully retired into our sleeping bags for the night.

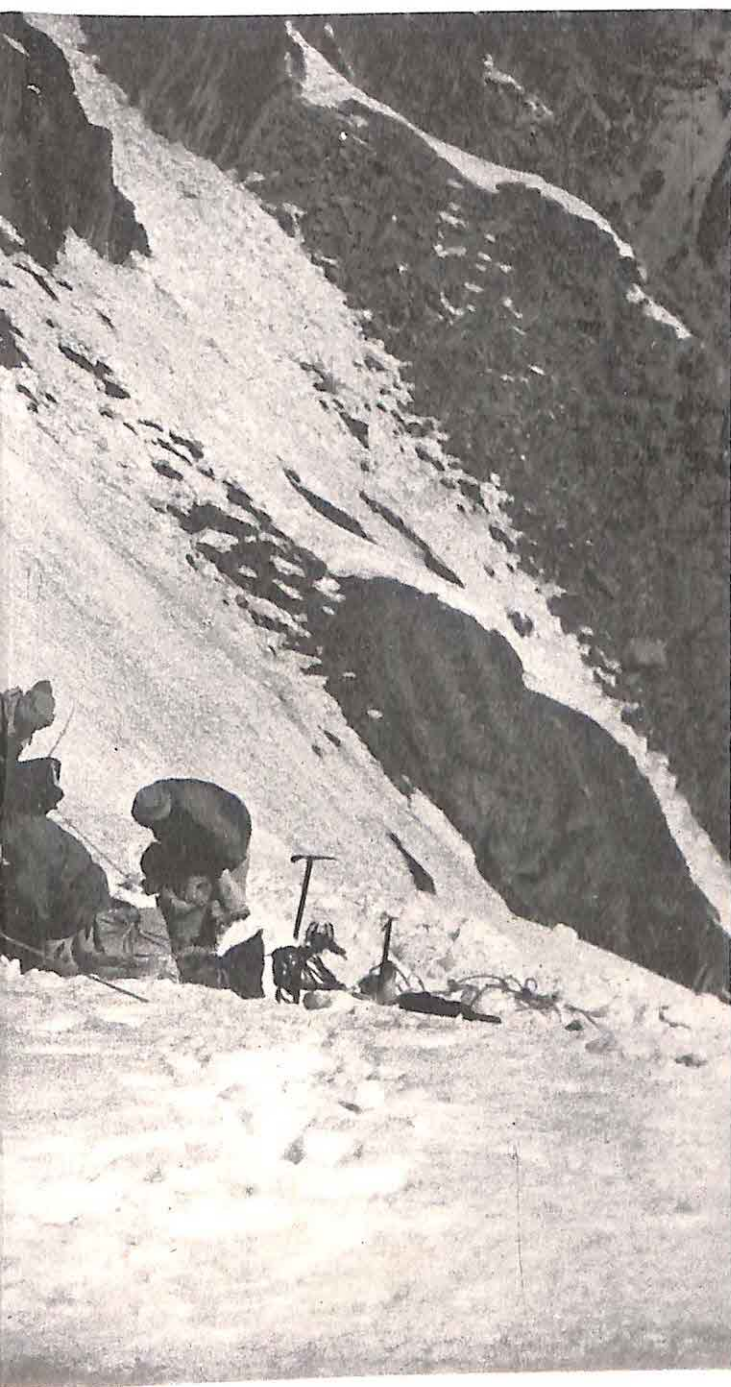
Next day dawned bright and sunny. After breakfast we left for Camp II. Assistant Sardar Chhotare, Nima Tenzing, Jabang Tenzing and Ang Tshering accompanied us. We plodded through feathery, knee-deep snow-drifts. Not far from the camp, the roar and thunder of an avalanche brought us to an abrupt halt. The avalanche spouted thick, dense snow clouds and a pall of snow flakes which enveloped us on all sides. We were roped together but could not see one another. Tucking my head into my rucksack to protect myself from the blinding snow and prickly, stony chips of ice, I shouted to the others to do likewise. For two minutes or more, the avalanche spattered us with ice and snow; we were rooted with terror. To our great relief, the snow-fall did not come our way—we were away from the main axis of the avalanche. This was the biggest avalanche

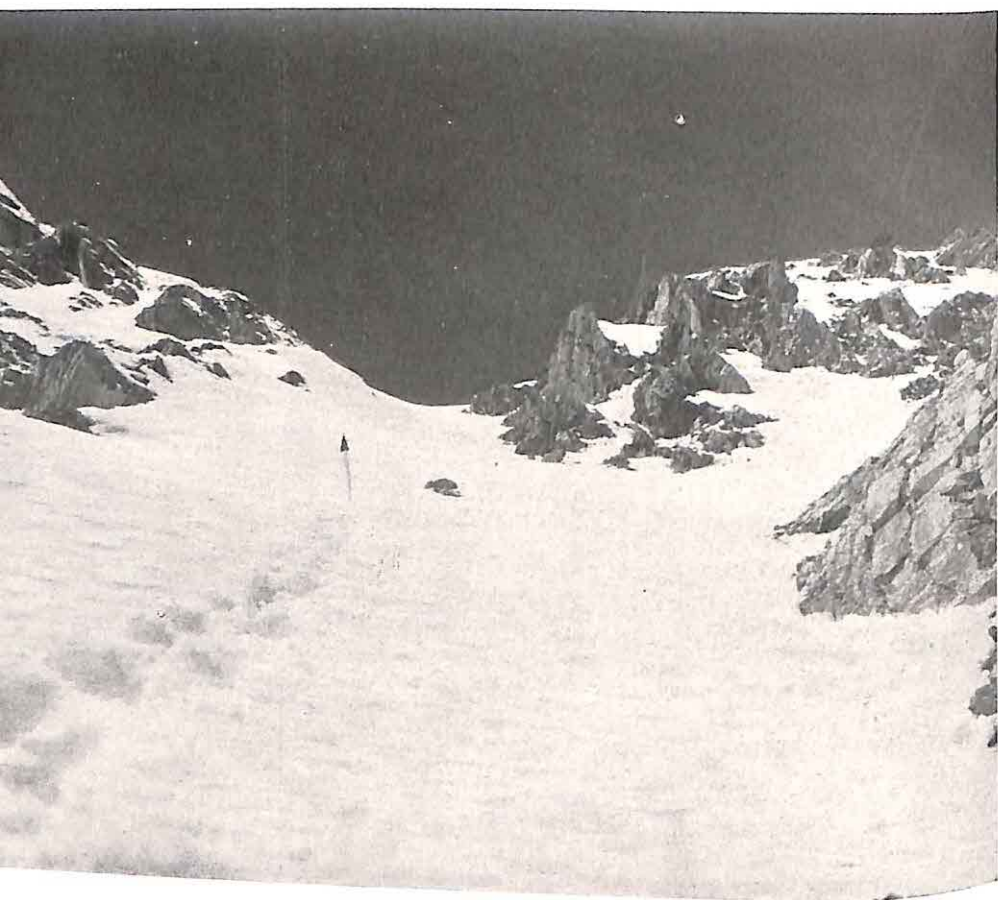


*The route from the Base Camp to Camp I was through picturesque
pine and birch trees*



Camp II (17,400 ft.)





The East Col

I had ever encountered. Its furious thunder was audible to people in Camp I, and even in the Base Camp.

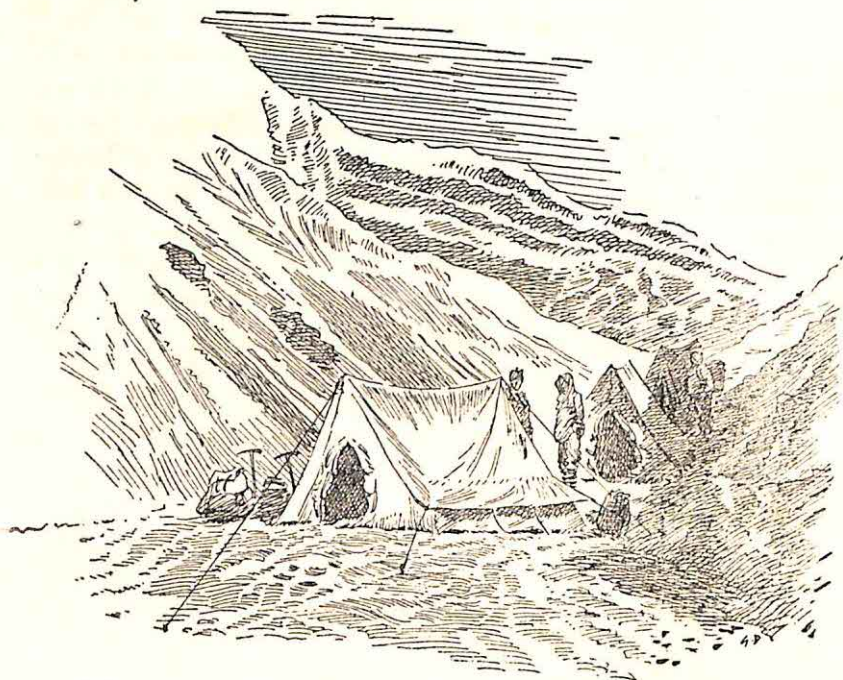
Shaken badly, but relieved at our safety, we pressed on. Marker flags had already been fixed on the route and we had no difficulty in re-making the part of the route buried under the avalanche spray. After nearly four hours of weary effort, we reached Camp II and unroped ourselves. A shower of stones came rolling down the rocky wall, that rose on the side of the camp, to greet us. Chhotare and I went a little ahead to look for a better camp site, but could not find any.

We got up early on April 19; it was a calm morning with plenty of sun. At 5-30 we were ready to leave. Shekhawat had a slight headache and was not feeling too bright. I made him rest. Chaturvedi and I, accompanied by Sherpas Chhotare and Nima Tenzing, tried to work our way up to the East Col. Sonam, Jungalwala and Sharma had earlier gone up about a hundred feet beyond this camp and fixed some rope. We decided to follow the same route. The snow was fluffy and knee-deep, the slope was very steep and, after a few paces, we were met by stones which came hurtling down from an adjacent rock. Fortunately, no one was hit. As we gained height, the snow became softer and deeper. We were floundering in a sea of waist-deep snow. With each step, the going became heavier; our strength was ebbing; every few minutes Chhotare and I, who were on the first rope, took turns at leading the team. The ridge became steeper and steeper, and finally rose at an awesome inclination of some 75 degrees. We fixed 500 feet of rope and kept wading ahead. After two hours, when we had dragged ourselves up about 400 feet, our progress was impeded by a rock buttress. We surmounted it at the end of half an hour's stiff-climbing and descended on to another ice-slope which seemed to lead to the East Col.

Planting marker flags, we ploughed steadily and laboriously through heaps of powdery snow, till two hours later, we were at last on the East Col, 800 feet above Camp II. A sense of achievement and satisfaction descended upon us. This was the place we had studied in detail during our early reconnaissance and it was pivotal for the success of our expedition. From here, we could see our old Base Camp and the Great

North Ice-fall. We were now standing on the thin edge of the Col.

Resting a little, we moved farther on and had to negotiate a series of ice terraces. To climb from one terrace to another, we had to cut steps on terrace walls and fix rope. Our success in reaching the East Col had boosted our spirits; we kept climbing from terrace to terrace, chopping and hacking our way with ice-axes. There were a few crevasses, but they were not very wide.



We reached the top of a terrace ideally situated for a camp site. The altimeter registered 18,800 feet; we decided to establish Camp III here. While the Sherpas were pitching tent, I forged ahead to look for a route up the terrace wall that loomed high only a few feet away from the camp site. Hoping that this was the last terrace, I was bent upon surmounting it to get on to the Shelf, after which we did not expect to find any impediments. I axed my way, clambering for half an hour, only to discover a gaping crevasse which it was impossible to tackle, all by myself. I, therefore, gave up and returned to Camp III.

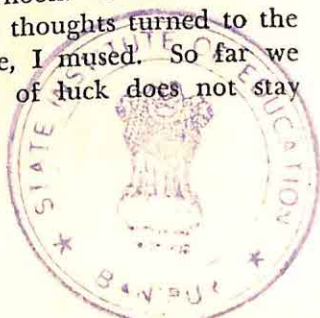
A biting wind had sprung up and the temperature was falling rapidly; moving down with speed, we reached Camp II in the afternoon. We had been climbing for nearly ten hours and were dog-tired. All the same, we were happy with the progress we had made. The receipt of the mail bag—the mail runner had arrived at the Base Camp the previous day and our letters had been sent to us—added to our joy. There was a message of cheer and good wishes from the Executive Council of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, which had met in Darjeeling under the chairmanship of our Prime Minister, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru. This buoyed us up a tremendous lot.

On our wireless set, Sharma informed me that trouble was again brewing with the Bhotias. As I did not want to take any more chances, I instructed Sharma to bring away as much of the stores as was possible out of the Base Camp.

The following day we rested. I prepared a tentative plan for the attempt on the summit. I intended to send Sonam, Jungalwala and Sharma in the first summit party on the 28th while Chaturvedi, Shekhawat and myself would make an attempt a day later. I kept these plans to myself, as I thought it better to announce them when everyone was assembled at Camp III.

Shekhawat was still ailing; Chaturvedi, Chhotare, Nima Tenzing and I prepared to leave for Camp III. No sooner had we finished breakfast than a sharp shower of stones came shooting down on us. One stone caught my plate with great violence dashing it away from my hand. A few stones fell on the tent, piercing the canvas, and one pointed one hit Dhanu like a bullet fracturing his forearm. After rendering first aid to Dhanu, we moved out of the camp. Nanavati was expected that day and could attend to Dhanu and Shekhawat.

We reached Camp III in the afternoon. Chaturvedi and I soon got into our sleeping bags. My thoughts turned to the summit. It may just be a week more, I mused. So far we had been very lucky. But the wheel of luck does not stay still; it keeps turning.



IX

BASE CAMP LOOTED

FIVE-THIRTY every evening was the time scheduled for inter-camp wireless communication. Accordingly, I opened the zip of my tent at 5-30 p.m. on the 21st and, with some difficulty, managed to connect the walkie-talkie set lying near the entrance of the tent.

Slipping the balaclava off my ears, I clamped on the headphones and switched the set on. Strange, disquieting messages poured in over the wireless.

"Except Camp II and III, every one clear off the mountain, clear off, clear off....." was a disjointed message followed by other agitated fragments.

"What's happened, Jungal, this is Sharma from Camp II."

"This is Lama from Manang—Help! Help!!...." Lama's voice was far from clear. It seemed as if he was about to say something in English when he was slapped into silence. The Bhotias insisted that he speak in Hindi, which they could understand.

"Lama and Sharma, please stop talking, let me speak to the leader first....."

There was tension in the voices. Something dreadful was happening. But what? It was not possible to make out easily. The reception on the walkie-talkie set was distinct and there was no mistaking the dismay and consternation in the words coming through. By now Chaturvedi, too, had jumped out of his sleeping bag and posted himself close to the headphones. We were both in a mighty flutter.

"Hello Jungi, this is Camp III. I can hear you loud and clear how about me, over," I shouted, trying to get to the other end.

"Base Camp, this is Camp III, Base Camp, this is Camp III, over," I repeated several times. But there was no response. The other side could not hear me, though I could hear them clearly; apparently my transmitter was not working. Thinking that moisture from my breath had frozen inside the transmitter, I held it over a burning candle for a while, but that did not help. Chaturvedi also struggled to put the set in shape but ultimately gave up. It was frustrating; we could hear everything, but no one could hear us. We were in a quandary. There was utter confusion for some time. We held on to the walkie-talkie set, which continued to emit a babble of disconnected, perturbing messages for the next five hours. Piecing these together, like a jigsaw puzzle, we began to sense what had befallen us. The complete story was somewhat as follows:

We had had no peace at our new Base Camp even though it was at a higher altitude (12,500 feet) and a greater distance from Manangbhot village than our previous Base Camp. We were pestered by bands of loungers and idle hangers-on. We had hoped that once we had shifted to our new Base Camp, the Bhotias would leave us alone. But we had hoped in vain. Our Base Camp still remained the focus of their attention and, being midway between Braga and Manang—lying on the route connecting the two—it was within easy reach of Bhotias from both the villages. Consequently, we were never left in peace. We were denied all privacy and from early morning, we could see a number of Bhotias, men, women and children, loitering all over the area, peering into our camp. They made no effort to hide their resentment towards us; we could hardly ever buy any provisions or supplies in Manangbhot village. Whenever our Sherpas went to the village for their daily shopping they came back empty-handed but with a bagful of promises for the future. Eventually, our patience was exhausted. We stopped giving things to these Bhotias; we made no purchases from them.

On the 18th, while half the team was away on the mountains, we were once again summoned by the Dhebas. Sonam and Lama, our usual emissaries, went to confer with them. The Dhebas blamed us for the drought of the past few days! They needed rain for their crops. But we had desecrated holy ground, and the gods, in their anger, were withholding

rain! When Sonam contended that it was hardly reasonable to label every patch of land in the region sacred, they countered with the argument that the land on which we had our Base Camp was their property and that we must, therefore, pay them tribute if we wished to stay. After some discussions and negotiations, they agreed to accept a sum of Rs. 100 as tax or rental charges and promised that if this amount was paid we would not be disturbed any longer. Lama protested that the demand was illegal; he tried to make them relent, but to no purpose.

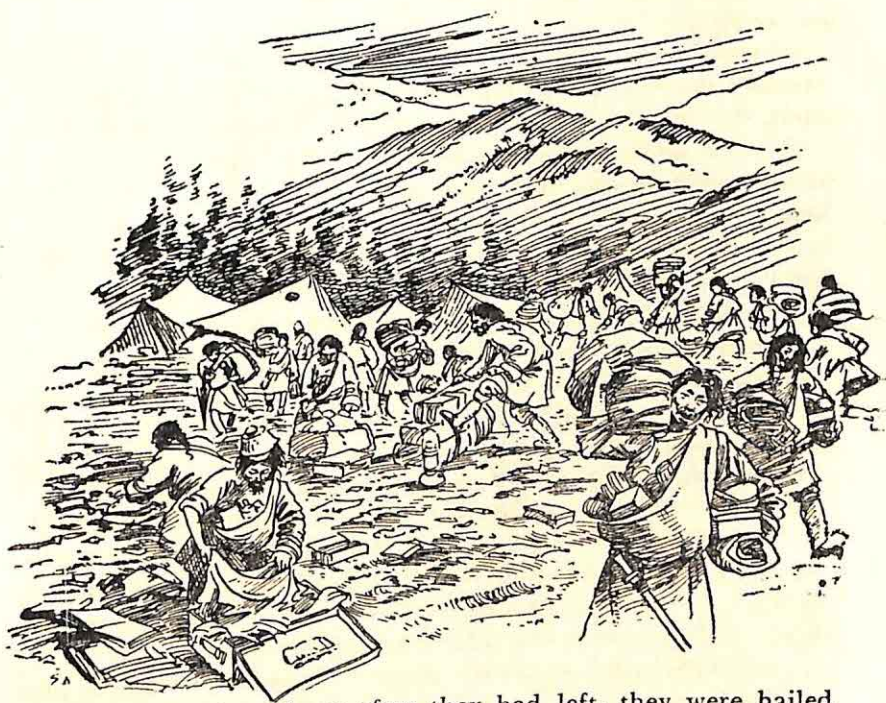
Probably, the Dhebas, left to themselves, would not have harassed us; but they were undoubtedly acting under pressure from the unruly elements among the villagers. Sonam felt that if we could buy peace for a hundred rupees, it was certainly worth it and, therefore, agreed to pay the price. The following morning Lama went to the village carrying one hundred rupees, several packets of cigarettes and a few fruit tins as presents. Sonam, Jungalwala, Sharma and Nanavati left for Camp I, where in the evening they learnt, on the walkie-talkie set, that Lama's gifts had been rejected and that the villagers, who had held another meeting, now wanted Rs. 2,000, failing which they threatened to loot our Base Camp. Some young rowdies who had attended the village meeting, had gone to the extent of asking for as much as Rs. 200,000. But finally the view of the majority had prevailed, presumably because it was felt that our expedition could not very well have Rs. 200,000 in ready cash. Lama explained to the villagers that he neither had Rs. 2,000 nor was authorised to make any payments without consulting the leader of the expedition. The village council, however, refused to wait for my return. They served an ultimatum that they would loot the Base Camp the following day.

Similar threats had been held out before, but they had never been executed. It invariably appeared that the intention was merely to extort money. It was, therefore, not surprising, that our men paid little attention to this ultimatum.

Next morning Sonam, Jungalwala, Sharma and Nanavati, accompanied by two Sherpas, proceeded from Camp I to Camp II. This was Nanavati's first climb through snow. Sonam and Jungalwala instructed him in the art of roping up and the

technique of climbing.

About midday, they reached Camp II, where Nanavati had to treat his first patient of the expedition. This was our assistant cook, Dhanu, who had a fractured arm and was in great pain. It was decided to move him to Camp I, whence he was to be transferred to the Base Camp. Sharma stayed behind at Camp II, so that he could move up the next day and join us. The rest of the team returned to Camp I with Dhanu.



Barely half an hour after they had left, they were hailed by Sharma, who told them that some villagers had been seen coming up to Camp I and that they had better hurry lest there should be something seriously wrong. The ridge approaching Camp I was visible from Camp II. Looking through their binoculars they saw strange persons moving about suspiciously along the ridge. As these Bhotias had never before been known to climb so far, this activity was ominous. The party rushed down as quickly as their feet could carry them and, arriving at Camp I, found about 40

voluble villagers engaged in a heated altercation with the Sherpas in the camp. Sonam kept cool and when the Bhotias demanded that we vacate our camp straightway, he reasoned calmly that the leader was up in Camp III, where he could not be contacted, and that our luggage could not be carried away in a day, unless they were all willing to carry the loads. This they refused to do. He succeeded, however, in persuading them to leave things as they were on condition that he and Jungalwala would accompany the Bhotias to their village to talk it over with the Headmen. Although Sonam and Jungalwala were tired, they went to the Base Camp with the Bhotias, virtually escorted as prisoners. They reached the Base Camp safely.

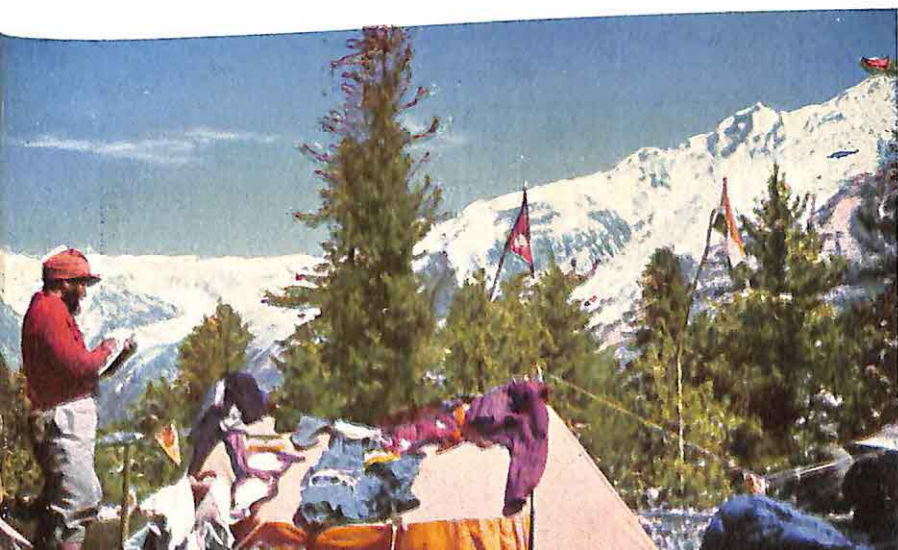
The Base Camp was completely denuded except for a piece of ordinary tarpaulin that formed the kitchen awning. It had been pillaged, lock, stock and barrel. Thondup, with tears in his eyes, narrated the story of the frightful loot. Nearly 300 Bhotias had collected at the camp and forcibly taken away all stores and equipment.

When Lama intervened, protesting against the villagers' high-handedness, he was beaten up mercilessly and taken away as a hostage. Thondup gave a graphic, heart-rending description of how every package of sweets had been ripped open by the Bhotias, and how before they helped themselves to the delicacies they had forced him to taste the contents of each box to make sure that they were not poisoned!

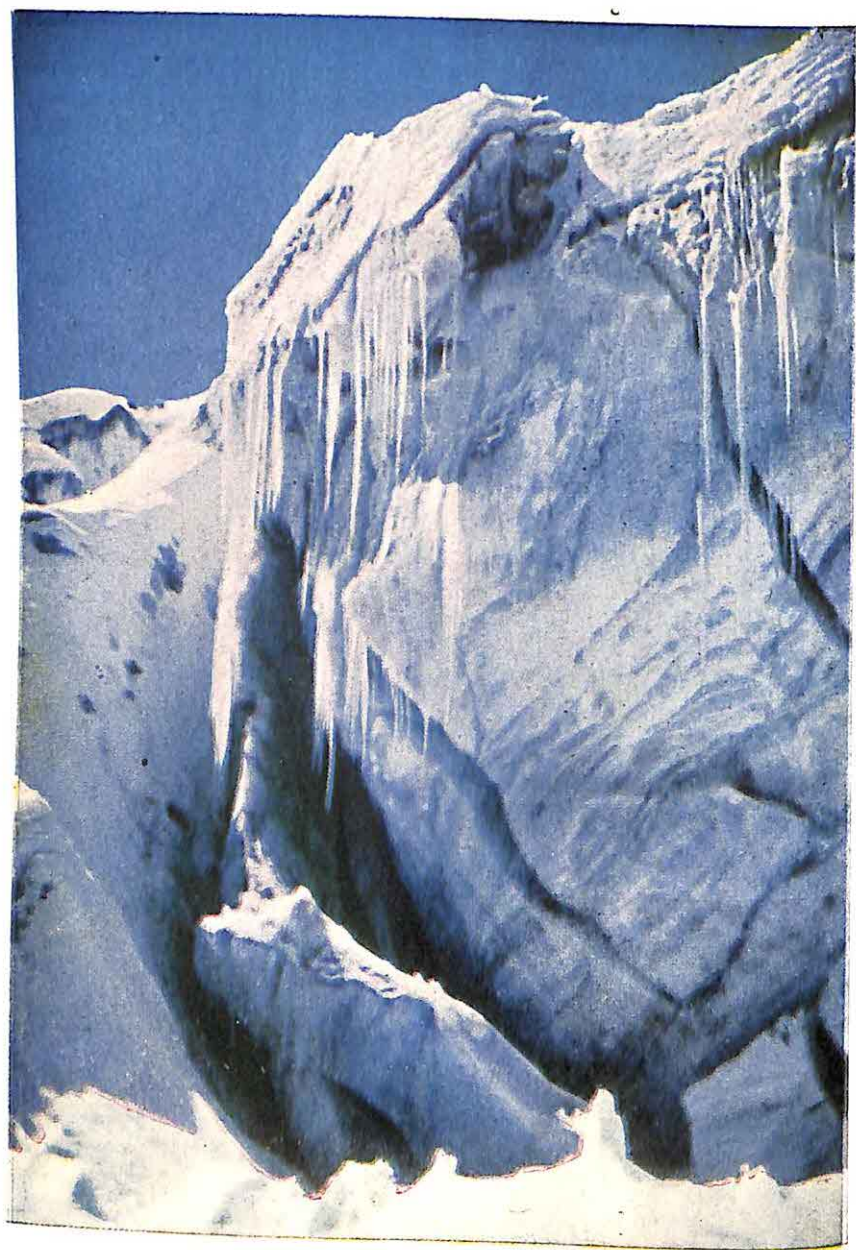
Sonam and Jungalwala, a little better than prisoners, went to Manang village, where they found Lama locked up in one of the houses and the village council in session. Chang was flowing freely and Sonam, sensing the mood of the crowd, adopted appropriate tactics. He walked on to the dais, sat beside the Chief Dheba and called for a bowl of Chang, which was served to him with the customary ceremony. No one could speak till Sonam had finished his drink. Then bedlam was let loose; every one spoke rapidly, every one joined in the discussion, there was not one who did not have an opinion to offer. It was difficult to make out what was what. Uncontrollable mob hysteria prevailed. Hands, fists and voices were raised, every one gesticulated violently. Sonam sat unperturbed and, perhaps, his very self-possession helped to relieve the tension.



Snow-laden pine



Base camp



Aiguilles beyond Camp II

The Dhebas, realizing that the consequences of their actions might be serious, were trying to be reasonable. But the crowd was in no mood to listen to reason and pressed its demand for Rs. 2,000. There was a sober element which tried to restrain the hotheads. This led to an endless debate. Surprisingly, Mr. Checkshirt held aloof from all this. We learnt later that he had been given a sound thrashing by some of the villagers for teasing women and misbehaving with them. After three hours of protracted wrangling, Sonam remarked that they were all too drunk to arrive at any sensible conclusion and promised to return to settle the dispute next day when they were sober!

Lama was brought out of captivity. The crowd did not try to stop Sonam or Jungalwala from going back after it had been arranged that a Nepali porter would stay with the Bhotias as hostage. This poor porter was naturally frightened out of his wits, but agreed to stay when Sonam assured him that no harm would come to him. After Thondup had served a good meal, Sonam conveyed all this information to the other camps over the walkie-talkie set. I was then able to obtain a full picture of what had happened.

Jungalwala and Sonam, taking advantage of the dark night, were successful in persuading a Nepali porter to steal his way to the Thonje check-post with an SOS message for Mr. Sarin and the Indian Embassy. They were informed of our calamity and requested to provide troops for our protection.

Next morning, discussions with the villagers were resumed, the Bhotias repeating their demand for Rs. 2,000. Sonam and Jungalwala had no option but to agree to the terms forced upon them. They promised to pay this sum before May 4, the deadline fixed by the Bhotias. They were both compelled to sign a pledge. Jungalwala wrote out the agreement in English. He also put a note stating that he was writing under compulsion and that the signatures were being appended under duress. When the Dhebas started examining and checking the agreement, Jungalwala had his heart in his mouth. He nervously nudged Sonam, who laughed pointing out that the Dhebas were holding the document upside down! They did not know a word of English and could not make out what was written. Jungalwala was greatly relieved. The Dhebas, wanting to make sure, asked Lama to scrutinize the agreement. Lama

pretended to read it seriously and declared that it was in order! "*Ek dam Ramro*" (perfectly all right), he said. This seemed to satisfy the Dhebas.

Sonam and Jungalwala persuaded the Bhotias to return our equipment, patiently explaining to them that without our equipment we could not proceed with the expedition and that if the expedition was called off they would not get their money! The Bhotias agreed to release the equipment, which was carried back to the Base Camp by porters provided by the Dhebas. But we had to pay porter charges. We were also presented with a bill of Rs. 500, said to be the cost of chang consumed during the Council meeting. We were asked to foot the bill as this expenditure had been incurred while our affairs were under discussion! Sonam alone, surely could not have consumed chang worth Rs. 500—or could he? All our stores were returned to us except for one Petromax lantern which, they claimed, had been placed at a shrine whence it could not be removed. Another condition imposed on us was that we should present the Bhotias with the other Petromax lantern before we returned to India.

Nanavati came down from Camp I to attend to our liaison officer, who was suffering from shock but, fortunately, not seriously injured. Nanavati dressed his bruises and put him to bed with a sedative. Jungalwala informed Mr. Sarin by wireless, and the Indian Embassy through a runner despatched to Thonje, of the agreement and the deadline fixed for the payment of ransom. The Base Camp was once again in order. Nanavati, Sonam and Jungalwala returned to Camp I, leaving Lama in the care of Thondup.

An interesting sidelight was the role played by Tsyangi, one of our "Manang Memsahibs". She visited Lama in incarceration, tried to soothe his fears and chase away his depression. She brought him food to eat, fussed over him like a fond sister and urged him not to worry. For this, she earned unpopularity with the other villagers, but she was not to be daunted. When Sonam and Jungalwala arrived in the village, Tsyangi went running to Lama to give him the welcome tidings. We were deeply touched by the girl's courage.

In our mail, a couple of days later, I found an account of the Annapurna II expedition sent to me by Roberts. It contained a passage about Manangbhot which read: "These rather boring days of rest were enlivened towards the end by the men of Manangbhot. Never a friendly folk, these Tibetan-like creatures had so far caused us little trouble. However, on the day that Dawa was due to go up to move our mountain

base camp to a higher and more suitable position, the coolies that had been promised failed to materialise. Instead came a summons from the Town Council that we had better come and explain ourselves. I despatched Prabhakar as an emissary and he later returned with a somewhat incoherent story. It seemed that we were accused of shooting bharal and smoking; the fine for these offences was 3,000 rupees, but if we promised to behave in future they would settle for 50. We had a licensed gun, but it would have been courteous, I had to admit, to have enquired about the local game laws. The truth is that I did not think that these normally wily sheep would be stupid enough to stray within range of Prabhakar's gun. Two of them had, and their meat was excellent. As for smoking, this was forbidden by a self-denying ordinance of two or three years' standing. We settled the affairs amicably enough the following day, paid an advance of 30 rupees, showed them the shot gun, now in several pieces, and submitted to a token confiscation of cigarettes. Later we discovered that, during the parleys, a raiding party had looted Base Camp of two tents, boots, a quantity of food and Annalu's trousers. One up to Manang."

Roberts had not mentioned this to me during our meetings. Perhaps he did not want to discourage us before we started on our expedition. However, we had read in the newspapers that he had been fined for smoking and accordingly I had issued firm instructions that no one was to smoke in the Manang area. But, when we reached the village, we were surprised to find that everyone in Manang, small children not excepted, were smoking. Perhaps, Robert's cigarettes were still going strong!

Another interesting letter which came by the same bag was from my friend, Navnit Parekh of Bombay. He, along with Mrs. Malti Jhaveri and some other friends, had been to this area, a few years ago. He wrote to me, "...The very name of Manangbhot raises many a sweet and nostalgic memories. Both Malti and I as well as our three comrades spent some of our happiest days in that most charming and picturesque valley. Convey our adoration to Goddess Annapurna and our greetings to the Bhotia folks.....". We wished we could have shared their warmth for the Bhotias!

X

THE FIRST ATTEMPT

APRIL 22 was a serene, cloudless day, but we got up gloomy and depressed. The evils that an unkind fate had visited upon us had shaken us badly, especially as we were now at the decisive stage of our expedition. With the Base Camp completely ransacked, there were no more loads left to ferry. Although the situation had improved considerably with the release of Sonam, Jungalwala and Lama, there was little hope of recovering our looted property. Uncertain of what the future held in store for us, we had to strike hard, and instantly, without wasting a moment; we had to conserve the limited rations available at the higher camps and plan a much quicker move up to the summit.

The best we could do was to turn our backs on our misfortunes. Once again we fixed our gaze on Annapurna III. We were soon out of our tents, trying to make the route to Camp IV. Chaturvedi and I on one rope, went first, while Chhotare and Nima Tenzing, on the second rope, followed a few minutes later. The route to the ice-terrace just above us had already been made and we were soon over it. We were hoping that that was the last terrace; but to our chagrin, the moment we had crossed it, we were faced with another very formidable one. To add to our difficulties, there was an ice wall, about two hundred feet high, which had to be negotiated before we could get on to it. It was necessary to hack and cut steps in this smooth, glass-like wall.

While Chaturvedi and I axed our way up this wall, the Sherpas turned west in search of an easier route. Belayed by Chaturvedi, I attacked the hard, compact ice for nearly an hour, hacking out foot rests, but our progress was at snail's

pace. Chaturvedi suggested that we had better wait for the Sherpas, who might succeed in discovering a less arduous route. I needed no urging. We were sorely disappointed when the Sherpas came back to report failure. There was no way out; once again we applied ourselves to the painful drudgery of chopping the ice to make notches. It was only after another hour and a half's bitter, back-breaking labour that we were able to reach the crest of the wall. Annapurna III now rose before us like a cathedral dome, far, far loftier than other mountains, majestic and magnificent. My gaze was riveted on the mountain and its enormous north face; my eyes were lost in its overwhelming immensity.



We were now standing on the North Shelf, which looked like an expansive, white paddy-field, nearly three miles long and two miles wide. Never before had I seen such a colossus bestriding the earth; we were transported to a strange world of fancy and dream which brought us ebullient joy and excitement.

"Burra Sab, now summit; we certainly go up," cried our Sherpas, who shared all our hopes and joys. Thank Heavens, there were no more terraces, vertical walls or ice-falls. It seemed we had surmounted all the difficult hurdles; all that

we needed now to attain the summit was enough physical strength, good weather and a smile from fortune. Happy and hopeful, we moved south, heading for the north face of Annapurna III.

We kept sinking up to our knees in soft snow and then pulling ourselves out for the next weary step. But we kept at it. When we reached the edge of the Shelf, we realised to our dismay that there was no further route, as a huge glacial trough separated the Shelf from the north face of Annapurna III. This trough was more than a thousand feet deep with almost sheer inclines. The floor of the trough, however, appeared to be sloping upwards and, about a couple of miles farther to the east, it looked as if it was practically flush with the Shelf. Therefore, we moved parallel to the trough at a mild angle, hoping to reach a place where it was level with the Shelf.

Once again it was a long, arduous and exhausting march which, at that height and at sub-zero temperatures, seemed to last an eternity. We had been heaving, pulling and pushing ourselves for many hours and the cold of the mountains was beginning to gnaw into our bones. Hour after hour we struggled and strained, gasping for breath. Eventually, we arrived at a spot from where the trough was no more than a couple of hundred feet below and from where we could easily get down to reach the north face of Annapurna III. It had taken us more than seven hours to get there; all energy seemed to have ebbed out of our bodies; we were at the end of our strength. We could go no further. Here was a suitable site for our camp; the altimeter reading was 20,800 feet; we quickly pitched tent and retraced our steps to Camp III.

Returning to the camp, we met Shekhawat, Sharma and some Sherpas who had come up from Camp II that day. They told us of the pledge Jungalwala and Sonam had been coerced into signing, to pay Rs. 2,000 by May 4, to the Manangbhotias who, in their turn, had promised to disgorge our looted stores and equipment.

Jungalwala and Sonam had returned to the Base Camp, but we were not quite sure of their movements. We did not then know that in actual fact our stores and equipment had been returned that morning. Our ration stocks at Camp III

were barely sufficient for the next three days, and in the very uncertain circumstances in which we were placed, we could not afford to lose a single day. It was unanimously agreed that, if we were to succeed, there was not a moment to lose. It became imperative to select a summit team immediately from among the climbers available. Sonam and Jungalwala had sent a message suggesting that, as they were unable to predict their movements, I need not wait for them in making my summit plans. In keeping with the finest mountaineering traditions, they were large-hearted, placing the expedition always before self. I was deeply moved by their selflessness.

Shekhawat, Chaturvedi and Sharma were selected to form the first summit party; they were advised to leave the next day, establish Camp V half-way up the north face of Annapurna III on April 24, and attempt the summit on the 25th. I decided to stay behind and wait for Jungalwala and Sonam. I wanted to be available in case any developments called for my presence.

April 23 was another clear and bright day. Shekhawat, Chaturvedi and Sharma got up early in the morning. They were in fine fettle.

"O.K., Kohli, we are off," they said in breezy adieu.

"All the best, look after yourselves boys," I replied.

Accompanied by three Sherpas, Sonam Girmi, Kancha and Nima Tenzing, they left for Camp IV after warm handshakes. A little later, two more Sherpas, Ang Kami and Tichy Gyalzen, who had arrived from Camp II with more supplies, also made off for Camp IV to join the summit party. Our Sherpas had realized the urgency of the situation and gave us whole-hearted co-operation. They were carrying heavier loads than before and covering longer distances. They were equal partners in our venture and their loyalty, devotion and concern in our hour of need were most touching.

Chhotare, who stayed behind, cooked for me. Ang Kami and Tichy Gyalzen returned in the afternoon from Camp IV with the news that the summit party had reached Camp IV and that the members were in good trim. All day long I waited for Sonam and Jungalwala, but there was no sign of them, nor was I able to establish communication with any of the camps. In the evening, when I switched on the walkie-talkie set, I was happy to get Sonam on the line. He informed me

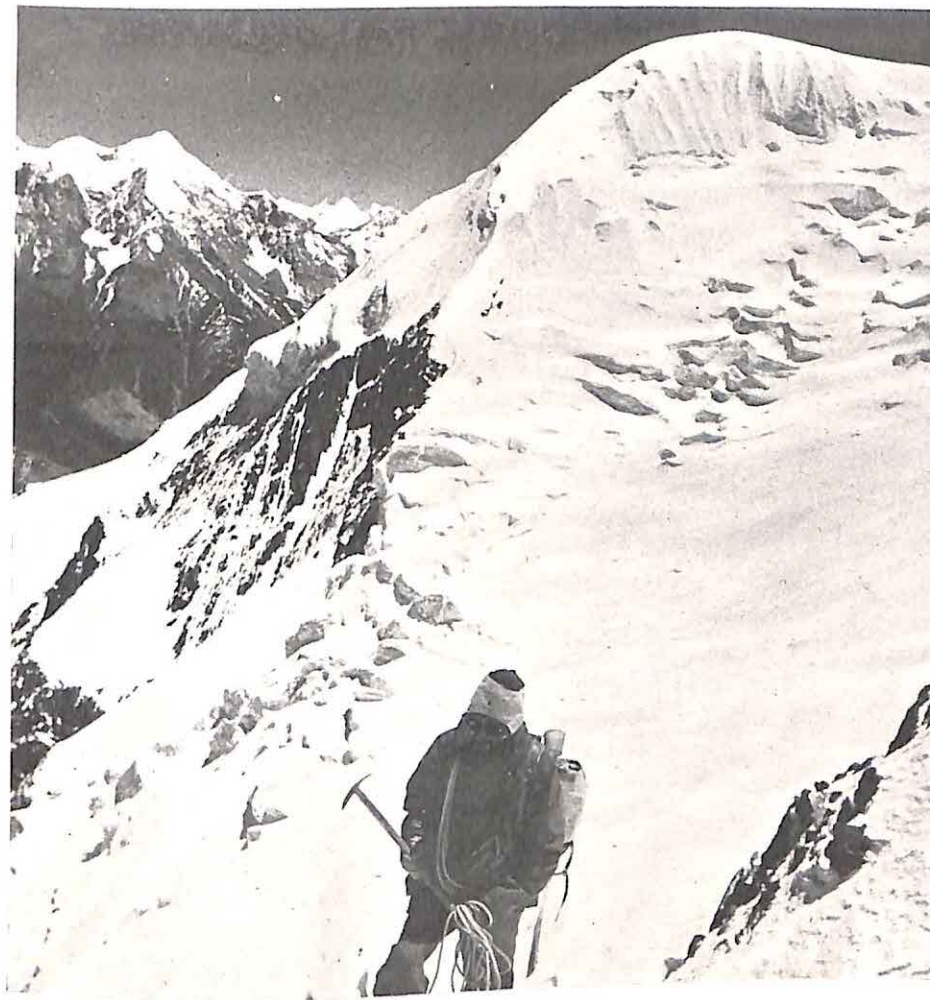
that Jungalwala and he were worn out by their numerous trips up and down to Manangbhot; they would rest that night and join me the following day. I was glad to learn that, except for a few minor items, all our stores and rations had been brought back safely to the Base Camp and Lama too was safe. Before moving up, Jungalwala despatched a runner to Thonje with a message to Mr. Sarin: "Sonam and Jungalwala contacted Manang people on 23rd April (.) They accepted on behalf of Expedition to pay Rs. 2,000 (Nepali currency) to the villagers by 4th May (i) If not paid in time, Bhotias threaten to loot camp and kill all members (.) Request immediate action (.) Liaison Officer under medical treatment and recovering gradually (.) Sonam and Jungalwala returning to higher camp (.)"

At least we had breathing time till May 4 and we had full confidence in the Sponsoring Committee who, we knew, would come to our rescue. Secure in that faith we could devote ourselves to our task with undivided attention. Giving a few instructions to Sonam on the rations he and Jungalwala should bring up with them next day, I switched off the walkie-talkie set, much relieved.

Next morning, the Sherpas went to Camp IV with more supplies and brought back tidings that the first summit party was still in Camp IV, disinclined to climb any further. This was discouraging news. But the trio had obviously come under the ill-effects of altitude.

Sonam and Jungalwala arrived in the evening. We had been separated for over a week, during which a great deal had happened. They looked tired but were in excellent spirits. We settled down in the Meade tent, where they recounted details of their dreadful experiences. I felt proud of them and considered ourselves lucky to have these two stalwarts with us. Sonam spoke in his usual quiet warm-hearted manner, recapitulating the long speech in Tibetan he had delivered to the Manangbhot Town Council giving them a piece of his mind. Till late that night we talked of the Manangbhotias. Then we turned to the future, discussed our ultimate, the mountain, and the summit party.

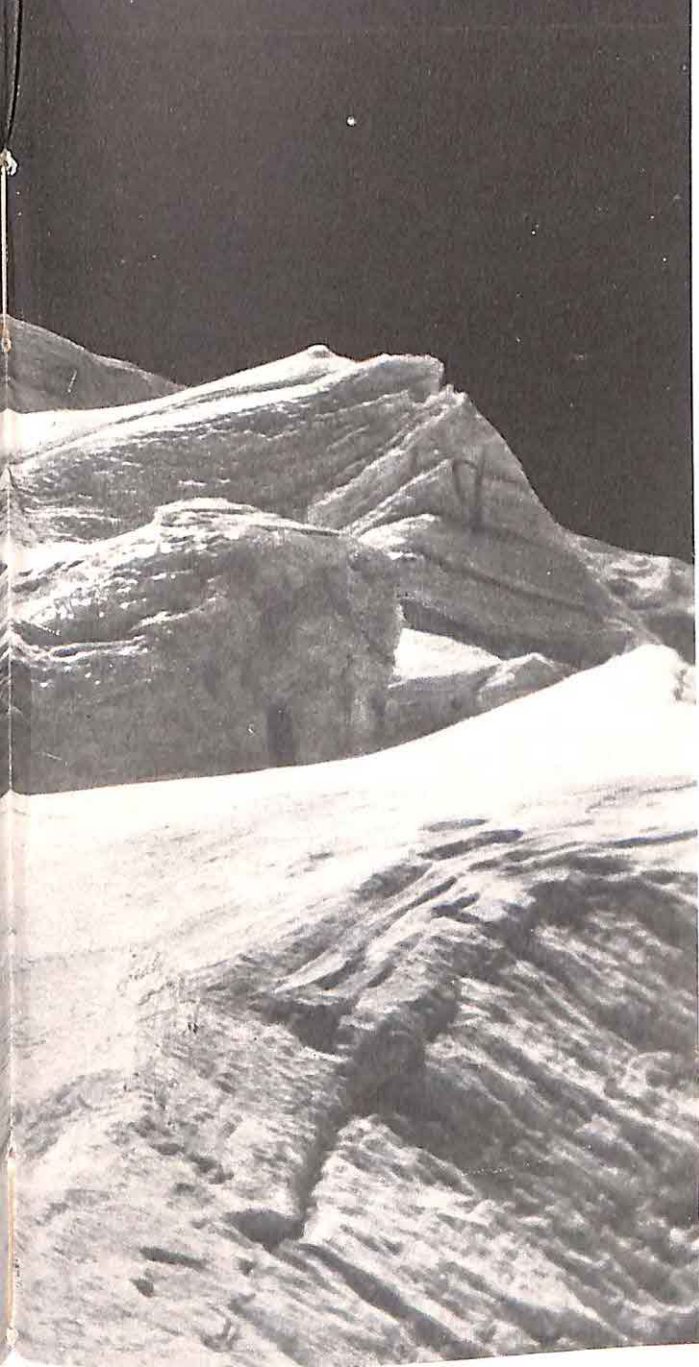
The following day, April 25, at 8-30 in the morning, accompanied by five Sherpas, we set out on the march to Camp IV.



Ice dome from East Col



The route beyond East Col to Camp III





A view of Camp III (18,800 ft.)

Once again crossing the ice-terraces, we reached the Shelf. Annapurna III and her north face, bathed in bright sunshine, glowed blindingly iridescent under a transparent blue sky. We tried to locate the members of the first summit party, but there was no trace of them. We pushed ahead rapidly and by noon we were in Camp IV. Here we met Shekhawat and the two Sherpas.

Chaturvedi, Sharma and Sonam Girmi had left that morning to establish Camp V, while Shekhawat, who was slightly indisposed, had decided to stay back. A little rest at Camp IV refreshed us. "Shall we proceed to Camp V and reinforce the first summit team?", I asked Sonam and Jungalwala. Both agreed readily. But we needed another tent and some additional rations. Each of us already had in our rucksacks over 40 lbs, which was about the maximum we could carry. Luckily, Ang Tshering, Kancha and Chhotare volunteered to carry the extra loads.

Advising Shekhawat to return to the Base Camp with one of the Sherpas, we pressed forward to Camp V. As we descended to the trough, we saw four black lilliputian dots, crawling slowly, inching their way, somewhere about midway in the trough. The snow here was softer, more powdery; floundering through waist-deep drifts was an exhausting effort. With our strength ebbing, our pace was no better than a snail's. We followed the trail of the four "black dots", which made our march comparatively easier. It took us two hours to cross the trough and, after another two hours, close on the heels of the first party, we reached the camp site they had selected. They were preparing to pitch an Arctic tent. The altitude was 21,800 ft. We levelled a platform next to their tent where we set up our Meade tent. It was already 4-30 in the evening. Retaining Sherpa Sardar Sonam Girmi, we sent back the remaining Sherpas and called it a day.

Sonam, Jungalwala and I planned to stay in the Meade tent, while Chaturvedi, Sharma and Sonam Girmi made themselves comfortable in the Arctic tent. We decided to leave early next morning for the summit. The usual melting of snow and the preparation of juices and tea had to be completed before we retired for the night. Melting snow is one of the most tedious, tiresome, time-consuming jobs on a mountain. Till

9 p.m. poor Sonam Girmi was trying to get water out of snow. To ensure that the juices did not freeze in our water bottles, we padded the bottles up in our sleeping bags. We slept fully dressed, with boots on, so that we could start as soon as we got up next morning.

An Arctic tent is slightly bigger than a Meade tent. While three air-mattresses can be spread out in an Arctic tent, there is no room for these in a Meade tent. With three of us confined to the latter, and with only two mattresses amongst us, it was not going to be a comfortable night. Sonam and I slept on the sides while Jungalwala offered to sleep in the middle, lying half on either mattress. Even normally it is not easy to sleep soundly at that altitude—one just manages to doze off and on. The night passed without much sleep; we lay in our bags eagerly waiting for the first streak of dawn.

There was much excitement and activity in the small hours of the morning. It was slightly dark when we came out of our tents and got ready to move. It was so cold that we could not tie our crampons and had to wait till the sun emerged. Finally, at 5-45 a.m., we set off.

Sonam, Jungal and I, on one rope, led the way, while Sharma, Chaturvedi and Sonam Girmi followed on another. It was a lovely day, the air was still, and hope buoyed up our hearts as we pushed forward enthusiastically.

We had hardly gone half an hour when our progress was impeded by a huge crevasse. To get across, it was necessary to cut steps in steep, hard, solid ice which chipped under our axes, the barbed pieces flying out like bullets. A sudden mishap, which fortunately stopped short of a tragedy, overtook us here. The second rope had now taken the lead and Sonam Girmi, who was chopping steps, signalled to Chaturvedi to move on. Chaturvedi started without warning Sharma, who was behind him, and no sooner had he taken a step than he slipped. The momentum of his fall dragged down Sharma, who was taken unawares. They were both plummeted downward nearly 150 feet. Miraculously, they were both stopped by Sonam Girmi who, in a flash, sprang to a safe snow platform, secured himself and belayed them splendidly. Disaster was thus averted. They were unhurt, though badly shaken; within minutes they started moving up again.

Our rope now took over and, one by one, all three of us cut steps in the ice, fixing about 200 feet of rope as hand-rail. It took us two hours of patient, persistent effort to surmount this obstacle. As we climbed another hundred feet, the summit, which had been hidden from view since we left Camp IV, stood out before us. The top of Annapurna III now loomed large, close above us. With luck, I thought, it would take us only a few hours more to get to our goal.



Our progress had been slow. Five hours after we had left camp, when we were about 2,000 feet short of the summit, Sharma stopped, expressing inability to go any farther. He was an intrepid mountaineer, but lack of sleep and loss of appetite during the past five days had made him weak and the recent fall of 150 ft. had shaken him badly. I advised him to return to the camp—one of us would have gone with him—but he insisted on waiting where he was until we returned.

We, therefore, continued our struggle, plodding through sinking snow, which became deeper and deeper. We were going up a mild slope, but, 2-30 p.m. found us still 1,000 feet below the summit. Here the slope became steeper.

Nearly four hours had passed since we left Sharma. I did not quite like the thought of his being left there alone. I asked Chaturvedi and Sonam Girmi to join him and go back to the camp. But Chaturvedi was keen on accompanying us. Although I was not happy about sending Sonam Girmi alone, we all agreed that it would be safe for him, as the slope was gentle, completely uncrevassed, and it was hardly an hour's journey down to Sharma, on whom we had kept an eye, looking round every now and then. In retrospect, I must confess I feel that it was an error on my part to have left him alone.

Now began the steep, back-breaking incline dressed with tons and tons of soft, deep snow in which we plunged hip-deep, zig-zagging and dragging ourselves with almost unbearable exertion. A strong, howling wind whipped us mercilessly. Heavy ominous clouds started piling up. We had hardly gone some distance when the snow gave place to hard ice and the ascent became steeper. We stopped. "Let's turn back, it is 4-30 p.m.," Jungalwala suggested. We glanced at our watches; the summit was another 600 feet above us, and at our rate of progress, we knew, it would take us no less than three hours to reach the top. It was to be a moonlit night, but a few patches of cloud were floating down in the valley, the sun was behind Annapurna I, the temperature was falling rapidly and a violent, freezing gale was already tearing into us. It did not take us long to make up our minds. "O.K., we go back," I agreed.

When we were near the camp, Sonam pointed to two tiny dots a little ahead of us and said that they were our Sherpas awaiting our arrival with tea and juice. We hurried to get

to them, but they seemed to elude us all the time. Ultimately, we realized that these dots were just a hallucination. The evening twilight was fading as we approached the crevasse where Chaturvedi and Sharma had nearly come to grief, but the moon was up and we could see the route. It had become terribly cold, and chasing after the illusory Sherpas had made us dog-tired. We crossed the crevasse, from where our camp was hardly 15 minutes' walk, but thereafter we could not make out the route. Jungalwala blew his whistle (whistles had been distributed to every member to meet such contingencies). Sonam Girmi responded promptly. Following the sound of his whistle, we descended slowly, belaying one another firmly. Again the route disappeared; hardly fifty feet beyond were our tents, but we could not see them. We blew our whistles over and over again, eventually reaching the camp guided by the whistle blasts from the camp.

We had been marching, climbing, pulling and tugging for more than ten hours and were dead beat. Our limbs were heavy as lead. Even the effort of eating anything was beyond us; we crouched into our bags and fell off to sleep instantly.

XI

REST AND RECUPERATION

I woke up in the middle of the night with a dry, parched throat. Sonam Girmi lay next to me, silent and still, for Jungalwala, who was unwilling to spend another uncomfortable night, had changed places with him. I asked for water. Girmi got up quietly, shuffled about, examining the flasks and water bottles lying inside the tent, but there was not a drop of water anywhere. Stretching out of his sleeping bag, he reached out his hand, scooped up some snow, put it in a container and placed it on a Butane stove. But before the snow could melt, both he and I had fallen asleep.

At 2 a.m. I got up again. Sonam Girmi and Sonam Gyatso were fast asleep. Without disturbing them, I managed to find a match-box, lit the stove and impatiently watched while the snow melted, so slowly that it seemed to take hours. At last, when the snow had liquefied, I dissolved some juice powder in it and poured it into my mug. Just then Sonam Gyatso got up, too, asking for water. I felt that the old fox had been awake for some time, but had waited for the drink to be ready! We both shared what was available and put some more snow to melt in the container. Then Girmi joined us, and for the next three hours we kept sipping juices. Tea and coffee were also prepared; our "drinks party" continued until the pale early morning rays crept into our tent. Since we were already up, Sonam and I volunteered to serve bed tea to our companions in the other tent, who were more than glad to get ready-made cups of the hot beverage. As we fumbled inside our tent, ice-cold drops of water fell on our faces. The frost from our breath that had coated the inside of the tent was now melting in the warmth of the sun.

We found that chunks of hair which had come out of our reindeer boots were floating all over the tent; even the container from which we had been drinking juice was not without them. Just as well, we had not noticed this at night!

We had become very weak and our rations were dwindling rapidly. The obvious answer was to return to the Base Camp for rest and recuperation, after which we could make another attempt. Somehow, our failure to reach the summit did not dishearten us. In fact, we considered that we had reason to be pleased with our achievement. We had had a close look at the upper reaches of the mountain and it gave us confidence for our next attempt.

Fixing our crampons, we left for the Base Camp. The snow in the trough was still soft, and we had to drag our feet as we went. Chaturvedi had completely run out of strength; he stopped short of Camp IV and had to be carried by a Sherpa. Leaving him at Camp IV in the care of two Sherpas, we continued our descent.

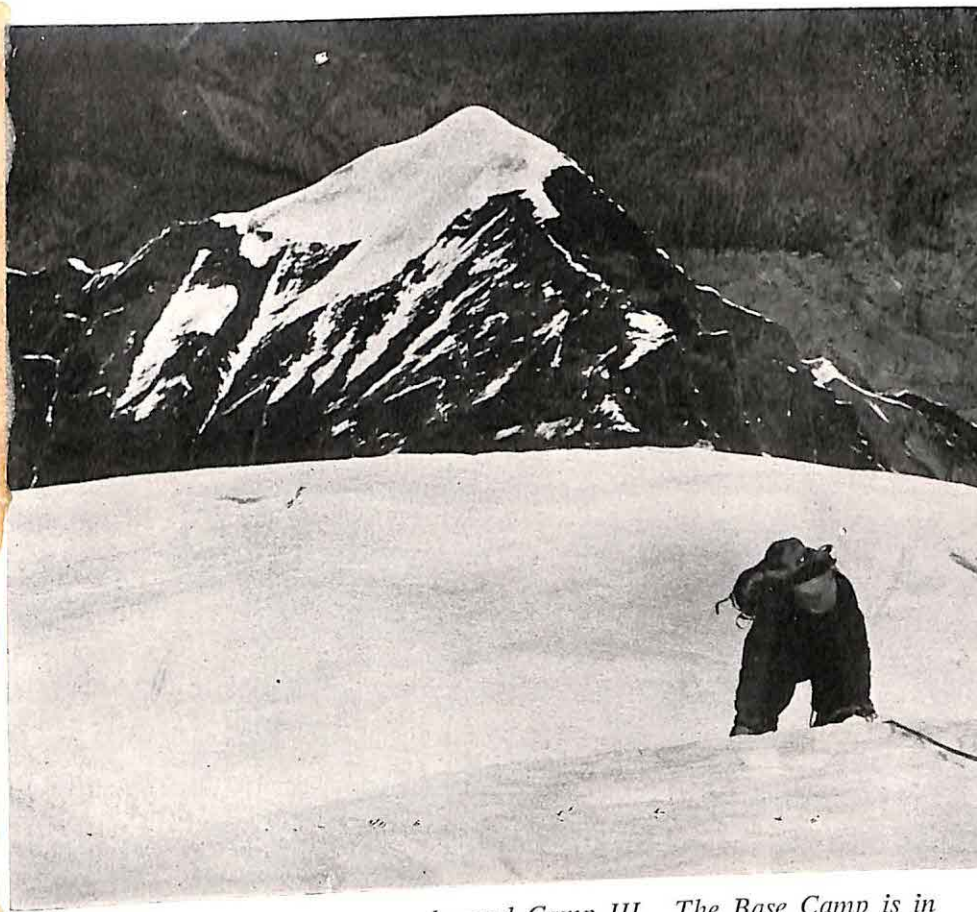
The snow was now firm and the route good. Marching fairly rapidly, we soon reached the East Col, after which we noticed a marked change in the surroundings. The pristine white snow which paved our route when we were going up was no longer there. In its place we found stale, yellow snow that crunched and cracked under our feet. Luckily, the slope was steep, at an angle of nearly fifty to sixty degrees and there were no deep crevasses.

Camp II presented a ghastly sight. The old camp site had been swallowed up by a crevasse and the new one seemed equally insecure. Fallen debris from the overhanging rock made the place look like an abandoned bomb site. One solitary Janet tent, now in tatters, stood forlorn amid the ruins like a haunted house in a ravaged city. We did not stay there longer than was necessary. The sharp, snow-laden area below Camp II was soon left behind. We were now on the worst part of our return journey. The route had altered beyond recognition. The crevasses we had earlier crossed without much effort looked menacing; ice cliffs which had provided a safe passage had tumbled ignominiously into the blue chaotic fissures; rocks were slipping and sliding continuously from the west wall, making us shudder and run to save ourselves from

those bouncing boulders. Tiny rivulets flowed between hummocks of ice, chiselling deeper and deeper into the ice layers. We could hear the reverberating roar of large streams flowing under the ice. There were rumbling and gurgling noises which made us shiver with fear. Any moment the rotting, yellow snow might give way under our feet plunging us into a watery grave.

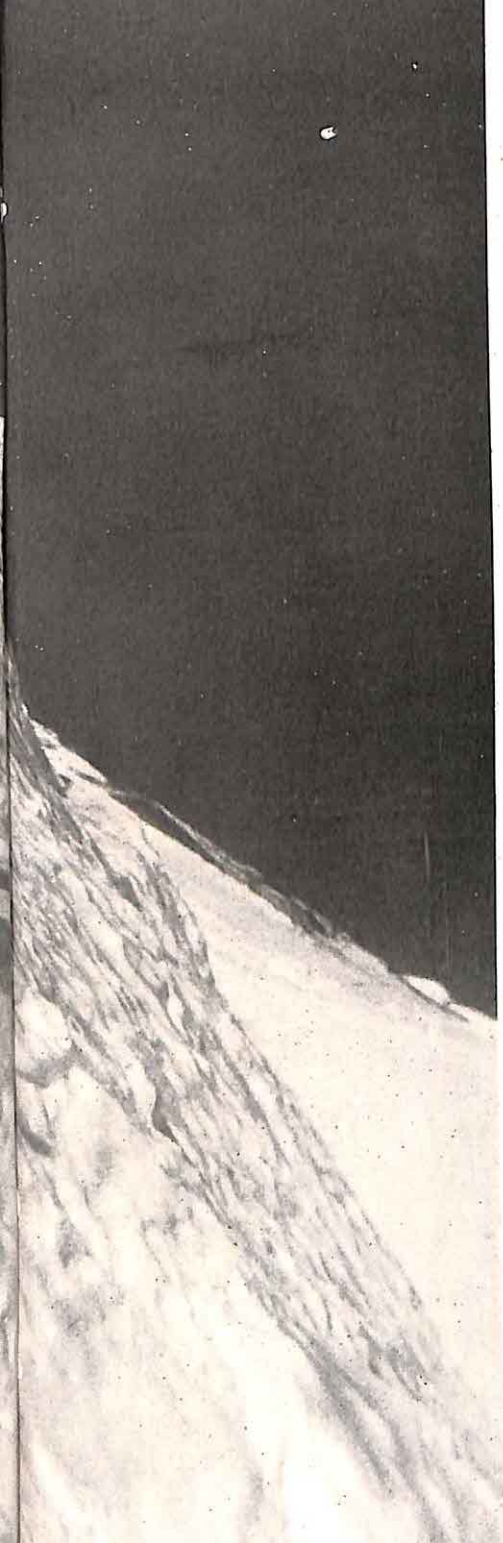
We descended towards Camp I, skidding and falling, despite all our care and caution. Just short of Camp I another near-disaster overtook us; the lip of a crevasse crashed down—the victim once again was poor Sharma. He went rolling underneath, taking with him the snow platform onto which he had jumped. For nearly five minutes he dangled helplessly before Girmi and others could pull him back to safety. On the tail-end of the same rope was Ang Tshering, who had to unrope himself to join the second rope which was following close behind. The crevasse-lip and the snow platform having toppled over, there was no other route and all those on the second rope were now stranded at the wrong edge of the crevasse. Sonam, Jungalwala and the Sherpas surveyed the whole vicinity for an alternative route, but saw nothing promising. The only way was to move westward, scramble up the almost vertical rock face and get down to the other side of the crevasse-lip which had given way. To accomplish this, some difficult rock climbing had to be done and, once again, Sonam rose to the occasion setting an example with a magnificent performance. The second rope had not yet crossed this rock when we saw Chaturvedi, approaching us, along with the two Sherpas we had left behind with him. I was not too happy about this, as Chaturvedi was in a weak state of health. He had to be lifted across this rock by the Sherpas.

Snow had been falling for several hours, clouding our vision, but at last, through the chinks, we saw the Mess tent of Camp I. The cheerful hailing from members and Sherpas brought us great comfort. We had found our haven; the ordeal was at an end. Nanavati, warmly wrapped up, emerged from the Mess tent to welcome us. He gave us steaming hot tea as well as all the news of the world gleaned from the month-old newspapers and the radio. That evening, we ate a proper hot meal for the first time in ten days. The Mess tent



Surmounting a terrace beyond Camp III. The Base Camp is in the background.





Cutting steps on a vertical wall



Manangbhot Council in session

The party leaving Camp III



now stood about two feet above its surroundings; the snow around it had melted, exposing loose rocks. Nanavati just kept talking and talking, pouring out his heart like a stream; he had been lonely for the past few days, without anyone to talk to. Shekhawat had returned only a little earlier. We got into our sleeping bags and read old newspapers in comfort by the light of our only petromax lamp, which had so generously been returned to us by the Manangbhotias, but which stood mortgaged to them!

Next morning, April 28, all of us were back at the Base Camp. Jungalwala, who had suffered a minor frost-bite in his foot, hobbled painfully down the easy scrub slope; laryngitis had deprived him of his voice. We arrived in time for a breakfast prepared by Thondup, who was, as usual, in excellent form. A chilly wind was sweeping the Base Camp, though after the piercing gales of the upper regions, it seemed mild. A pale sun illumined a grey sky, where clouds knotting up presaged bad weather. After days of arid, snowy wastes, it was pleasing to set eyes on vegetation and greenery. Never did birch and fir seem so beautiful, nor pine needles so inviting. We were happy to be back in an enchanted land of peace and plenty—so, indeed, our Base Camp appeared after our experiences above the snow-line. Thondup, crowned with a Tibetan fur cap, rushed about with omelettes and hot cocoa; Lama was all smiles, happy that we were back—he had sorely missed our company while we were away on the mountain and, after the rough handling he had had from the Bhotias, he was pining for friendly faces.

The Base Camp was a small hamlet of tents with the Mess tent dominating the scene. Inside the Mess tent, we sat on assorted packing cases, eating an enormous breakfast and listening to our transistor radio blaring treacly film songs of love-sick heroines. That evening, many a birch log met its end as we relaxed in a ring round the camp-fire, eating and talking far into the night. Light snow flakes fluttered down and covered the camp with a thick white blanket. Pine trees in their white mantle stood like tall and mysterious snowmen, recalling Robert Frost's poem, "On Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening".

The camp-fire burnt big and bright till, one by one, we

stole away to the warm, snug comfort of our sleeping bags, leaving Shekhawat and Nanavati still circling round the fire to avoid the smoke blowing into their eyes. Nanavati had evidently not had his fill of conversation; he kept on talking to Shekhawat while the rest of the camp slept peacefully. When half the night was spent and the fire was a-dying, they too snuggled into their sleeping bags. We knew that we would now have a few days' rest before renewing our quest of the distant peak.

Next morning, Jungalwala's frost-bitten foot engaged Nanavati's attention. During our long and arduous march towards the peak, the big toe of his right foot had turned pale with frost-bite. We had applied a little prescol ointment on it. Our cook, Thondup, with his vast experience of mountains and frost-bites, prescribed hot-water fomentation. This was a dreadfully agonising treatment. Three Sherpas had to hold down Jungalwala physically as a piece of cotton soaked in hot water was spread out on his toe. He yelled and screamed. "For God's sake leave me alone, I'll die," he would say, grinding his teeth. At times we could not bear to see him wince and writhe and fled from his presence. All that we could say to him was, "Be brave. This will do you good." The treatment, however painful, had to be administered and this was done twice a day. Such hot fomentation was, later, pronounced to be in contradiction of current medical opinion. But gradually, Jungalwala improved and his protesting screams became feebler and feebler.

Our Base Camp was well situated. Birch, fir and pine trees grew in plenty, with small clearings in between which formed ideal camp sites. A thick carpet of pine needles, interspersed with pine cones, gave the area a luxuriant lived-in look. Barely a hundred feet away, the ground dropped to a thousand feet, rolling down in crumbling mud cliffs right down to the floor of the Marsyandi valley. Standing on the edge of the precipice one could scan the entire length of the valley, stretching east to west, for nearly fifteen miles. Most of the seven villages in the valley were north of the river, on bare, rocky slopes devoid of trees and scrub. The southern side of the river presented a contrasting picture of thick vegetation with juniper and large alpine flowers in full bloom. Indiscrimi-

nate felling of trees near the villages had denuded the entire hill-side. Consequently, every three or four days, the villagers of Manangbhot descended to the river, crossed over to the southern side over bridges that they themselves had made and climbed up the densely forested hills in search of firewood.

As our camp was in a thickly wooded area, the Manangbhotias took particular delight in romping through it and circling around, hoping to pick up any odd bits and pieces that might come their way. On their wood-gathering days, at five in the morning, our sleep would be disturbed by the babble of shrill feminine voices and the playful squeals of children—adult males rarely came to collect wood. We had to make sure that our equipment and provisions were not left unguarded. The Manangbhotia women invariably swore at us, pronouncing their oaths loudly, reinforcing them with insulting gestures. Jungalwala retorted with a few choice oaths in Nepali. This always brought a large crowd of women thronging near his tent to pour out their wrath. But Jungalwala's greater powers, endurance and stronger lungs generally won the day; the chattering swarms dispersed, leaving us in peace to return to our interrupted sleep. Jungalwala, meanwhile, kept simmering, muttering to himself and occasionally shooing off a straggler.

We had variable weather. Some days it snowed heavily, making the place look like a Christmas picture post-card, while on other days, the sun shone brightly from a cloudless, azure sky. We liked this lazy life. The most active of us did no more than read a little under the lengthening shadows of tall pine trees. Some were content with listening to the sighing of the wind as it played among the trees. Sonam Gyatso slept and snored most of the time. In good weather, all meals were taken in the open. If it snowed, no one stirred out of the Mess tent. The radio blared full pelt all day, with Lama exploring every meter band in his diligent effort to fill each minute of the day with different sounds and music. A radio telephone conversation between a "Major" in Simla and a "Captain" in Meerut that our receiver picked up one day fascinated Lama. He was impressed by the wealth of personal information provided over the air and especially the "Captain's" commendable achievement in passing the promotion examination!

We ate well, had nourishing food and relished the rich fare. An ample supply of *desi* (pure) ghee had been brought from Delhi. Spoonfuls of this, hot and steaming, were poured on rice pulao and mixed with pulses and other dishes. Fresh vegetables were not available locally, but we enjoyed our dehydrated peas which, when cooked, were delicious. Our Nepali porters occasionally went to Thonje and brought back chicken; goats for meat were procured from Khangsar. Muleteers who visited Manangbhot with loads of salt to be bartered for buckwheat brought goats with them. These we purchased cheaper than at Khangsar. We missed our sweets—Sohan halwa, Karachi halwa, barfi and fruit cake—all of which the Manangbhotias had looted from our Base Camp! Chaturvedi, however, was always surprising us by pulling out of his hat, as it were, cardamoms, dates, sweet mango peel (*amras*), scented betel nut and all manner of other delicacies, which he passed round liberally. We envied him for this, but could never lay hands on his magic box!

We usually had a heavy breakfast with corn flakes, *suji*, *semia* or oats, eggs, fried liver, potato chips and a variety of beverages like tea, coffee, cocoa, chocolate or milk with Horlicks. With the afternoon tea, we had pancakes and diverse kinds of *pakor*as, biscuits, fried potatoes and eggs. Chaturvedi was the only vegetarian amongst us. To provide him with a protein diet, we gave him eggs. He had eggs for breakfast, lunch and dinner until, one day, he got so fed up with eggs that he cried like a child and threw his plate away in petulant anger at the very sight of eggs! Jungalwala, with his frost-bitten toe, received preferential treatment. He got an omelette of four eggs and double helpings of other savoury dishes, including fruits.

It must be mentioned that it had been arranged that All India Radio would play back the collection of folk songs and music we had made on our tape recorder. Listening to these transmissions from Delhi, naturally, gave us a tremendous kick. The Sponsoring Committee was also kind and thoughtful enough to send weekly bulletins and progress reports to our families, keeping them regularly informed about our welfare. This was a gesture which our families greatly appreciated, for our letters usually took a long time to reach them.

A lively diversion during our rest period was provided by a kind of volleyball we played in the evenings. The Sherpas and the members of our team formed a ring, passing the ball from one to another. Shekhawat and I had thought out this game and gave the first few demonstrations. When the Sherpas joined in, their hefty clouts constantly sent the ball flying over the pine trees, rolling merrily down the hills towards the grey waters of the Marsyandi, with a batch of wildly yelling Sherpas in hot pursuit. Having retrieved the ball, they would endeavour to kick it back to the playground; but their skill at football being no greater than their aptitude for volleyball, the ball would go shooting off in the opposite direction. The Sherpas would once again go pelting after it amidst boisterous merriment. This unconventional modification of the rules, we had carefully formulated, made it so frustrating for Shekhawat and me that we usually withdrew after a few minutes of initial participation. Nevertheless, it demonstrated our Sherpas' remarkable fitness, for it was no small matter running up and down the hills chasing a ball at an altitude of 13,000 feet.

During this period, our camp was visited almost regularly by friendly young Tibetan refugee children whose parents lived in the Bhotia villages. Most of them were bright, intelligent youngsters with engaging, innocent faces. They offered to do odd jobs for us, and in turn, we gave them food and empty tins or packing cases which were in great demand in the Manangbhot village.

One of these refugee boys was Phu, an exceptionally cute youngster of nine years. Barely three feet high, wearing a long Tibetan cloak and a Lama-style hat, he had pleasing looks. His eyes were alert and inquisitive; their expression varied from one of intense concentration—while watching us washing and cleaning which must have seemed to him utterly strange—to one of childish wonderment while listening to our radio. Often he would place his ear against the back of the radio and listen with fascinated amazement. If we playfully increased the volume, he would leap back in surprise and, after a moment's bewilderment, join us in our laughter. When he got tired of watching us, he would pick up a scrap of paper, examine it minutely, then slap it to his face like a Tibetan

devil-mask and start dancing in slow, weird movements; or else he would sit cross-legged on the pine-carpeted ground, pretending to read the paper, mimicking some monk he might have seen at prayer. He did not know a word of our language, but he could understand enough of our gestures to fetch a mug of water from the cook-house or wash the dirt off his face. He was strong, stocky and industrious as an ant. His round Mongol face would peep into our Mess tent, sometimes twice a day, which meant climbing and descending a total of about 3,000 feet to and from his village. We came to love his cheerful presence and nicknamed him, "Our Phu". Shekhawat was particularly impressed by the lad. He taught him to salute in the Naval manner and to shout at the top of his voice: "Indian Navy ki jai". It was by frequent repetition that Shekhawat made sure that Phu got it right. The dialogue generally followed a set pattern:

Shekhawat	..	..	"Bolo" (speak or shout)
Phu	..	..	"Bolo"
Shekhawat	..	..	"Indian"
Phu	..	..	"Indian"
Shekhawat	..	..	"Navy"
Phu	..	..	"Navy"
Shekhawat	..	..	"Ki jai"
Phu	..	..	"Ki jai"
Shekhawat	..	..	"Bolo Indian Navy ki jai"
			(shout—victory to the Indian Navy)
Phu	..	..	"Bolo Indian Navy ki jai"

All endeavours on the part of Shekhawat to get the little fellow to drop the "Bolo" were of no avail!

Tsyangi, too, visited our camp occasionally, but she had to make these trips with great circumspection, concealing her movements from the Bhotias. As she had helped Lama during his imprisonment she had fallen out of favour with the villagers and was always in danger of being punished for her indiscretions. Nonetheless, braving the opposition, she came to the camp under cover, bringing eggs and dried maize as presents and thoughtfully enquiring about the well-being of everyone of us. Tsyangi and Phu were our sole friendly contacts with the people of Manangbhot.

The sword of Damocles hung over us; we were living under

the Bhotias' ultimatum to pay them Rs. 2,000 by May 4, or suffer the consequences of their wrath, which might mean bodily harm.

The effect of our despatch was immediate. Mr. Sarin acted instantaneously, got in touch with the Indian Embassy in Nepal and, within minutes of the receipt of our message, sent us the following signal:—

"Sponsoring Committee very concerned regarding difficulties created by local inhabitants. Do not like blackmail methods adopted by them but would agree to payment of minimum amount necessary. Indembassy taking suitable action for protection with Nepal Government. Hope arrangements made would ensure safety members as well as equipment.

"Sponsoring Committee wish you to know that each of you is very much in our thoughts and hope your endeavours despite above difficulties and unknown factors in last stages of climb will be crowned with success and you will all return safely and in good health."

This message did much to comfort us. It was heartening to know that the Sponsoring Committee was solidly behind us. Miles out in the lonely mountains, wrapped in silence and desolation, isolated as we were from the world below and our people at home, these few thoughtful words were like a balm to us.

The Government of Nepal, acting on the request of the Indian Embassy, immediately ordered adequate troops to go to our rescue and protection. To make sure that no harm was done to the expedition, Mr. Sarin also asked the Indian Embassy for an immediate despatch of Rs. 2,000 from Pokhra through a mail runner. The authorities at Pokhra were requested to ensure that the money reached us positively before May 3.

The ransom money was, however, not needed, thanks to the timely arrival of the troops. On May 1, we learnt that soldiers had been seen near the village. We sent two Sherpas to meet the officer commanding the troops. Even before our Sherpas returned, a detail of four soldiers under the command of a non-commissioned officer came to our camp with a message from the officer. It would not have been prudent to station the troops too far away, whence they could not be

summoned quickly in an emergency. We, therefore, advised the N.C.O. to move his soldiers into our camp. The officer duly appeared in response to our request, and it was agreed that they would come to our camp the next morning. We had enough rations and were able to provide for the soldiers adequately. After the arrival of the troops we felt completely secure.

Greatly relieved, we assembled in the Mess tent to finalize our summit plans. As the leader of the expedition I had decided to stay out of the first summit party. But before I could speak out my mind, Sharma asked for permission to make a suggestion. "Considering the performance of all of us during the first attempt," he said, "you, Sonam Gyatso and Sonam Girmi should constitute the first summit party."

Shekhawat, Jungalwala and the others promptly supported this view; circumstances too favoured the choice. Once again, it was heart-warming to find selfish motives and ambitions totally absent. What was uppermost in our minds was that the team as a whole should succeed. I, therefore, decided to accept the consensus of opinion among the members. We left the next day for Annapurna III, to be followed by Shekhawat, Sharma and Chaturvedi, a day later.



Camp IV established on the North Shelf (20,800 ft.)



*ne and birch branches, covered with fresh-fallen snow look
beautiful and enchanting*





Our "Phu"

XII

THE PEAK

WE were ready for the final bid. According to plan, Sonam Gyatso, Sherpa Sardar Girmi and I were to attempt the peak on May 6. Shekhawat, Sharma and Chaturvedi were to follow a day later. Jungalwala, who was not yet permitted to walk, had to be left behind at the Base Camp.

It had been snowing for four days and the entire track was buried under a heap of heavy, fresh snow. We sent Girmi and three other Sherpas on May 1 to remake the route. They were instructed to shift the last Camp as high up on the mountains as was possible for, during our first attempt, we had realized that deep snow drifts had retarded our progress to a considerable degree and it was wiser to reduce the distance between the last camp and the summit to the minimum.

This gallant party of four Sherpas left in the afternoon, but no sooner had they reached Camp I than it started snowing again. The weather forecast by All India Radio, however, promised a kindly break. The evening broadcast said: "This is All India Radio, Delhi. Here is a special weather bulletin for the Indian Annapurna III Expedition. Winds..... weather cloudy to fair, forecast for the subsequent 48 hours—fair weather, I repeat....."

Next morning (May 2) as Sonam and I were preparing to leave, we saw Chhotare coming back from Camp I. He was alone and still a thousand feet or so above us, but Sherpas are an amazing people; they can recognise their comrades and communicate with them easily over long distances. We wondered why Chhotare was coming back. Was the whole party returning? Fortunately, the weather had started improving; the clouds were lifting and the sky was fairly clear.

We were relieved to learn that it was only Chhotare who had come down. His little finger, which had been hurt a few days earlier during a game of volleyball, was swollen and pain had forced him to give up. His other companions had forged ahead and were making for Camp II.

Chhotare was, perhaps, the strongest Sherpa in our team and he was my Sherpa Sathi. I was sorry he could not accompany us. Chhotare was a rough, uncut diamond, sharp in his manners, but warm-hearted, simple and without any guile.

Our kitchen boy, Da Nami, who had never gone higher than 13,000 feet, volunteered to take Chhotare's place, and the latter gladly lent him his high-altitude kit. Thus, accompanied by four Sherpas, Sonam and I left for Camp I.

We had decided to carry a large quantity of cooked food from the Base Camp as past experience had shown that tinned food could prove dull and insipid. Unfortunately, we did not have 'instant food', which is the latest innovation in mountaineering rations. This kind of pre-cooked, dehydrated food was recently used by Sir Edmund Hillary on his Makalu expedition.

Our high-altitude rations were an improvement over those carried by the Indian Everest Expedition. We had included items like fruit cake and canned fruit, but the predominance of tinned food was still a great handicap, for after a few days of climbing, members invariably complained of nausea and preferred to go without food rather than eat tinned stuff.

We took an adequate number of egg parathas, poories, Nargisi koftas (minced mutton balls), fried liver, thukpa (a Tibetan dish like rice pulao) and plenty of chutney to provide variety in taste. This worked wonders and we ate well at every camp.

We had hardly ascended half-way up to Camp I when we heard someone shouting from below. The sound came from somewhere other than the Base Camp. Sonam walked a little towards it to discover Devi Dayal, our mail runner. This was his first errand to our new Base Camp and, having climbed up a wrong ridge, he was heading for Camp I instead. His mistake was lucky for us as it enabled us to receive our mail.

The mail-bag brought us, among other things, some tomatoes. However insignificant they might seem to others,

to us they were most welcome. We had not tasted tomatoes for the past three weeks. Keeping a few pictorial magazines and some personal letters, we sent Devi Dayal to the Base Camp, and set off on our uphill journey which, we sincerely hoped, would be our last before we returned home.

Even the freshly re-made route marked by Sonam Girmi's party, which had gone a day ahead of us, was hidden under new flakes of snow and we had to fumble and grope for our way through an uncharted soft, white sea. At times, there were sharp snow showers which mercilessly whipped our faces. But we were in high spirits as we plodded forward. On the third day, we reached Camp IV. Next day, May 5, we reached our last camp, where Sherpas Ang Tshering and Kancha joined us. Ang Tshering was a good cook. There was, however, no need for any cooking up there. Our keen appetites were well satisfied by the food we had with us.

Under a light snow drizzle we inched upward, following the trail made by Girmi and other Sherpas who had gone ahead of us to move Camp V to a higher altitude. We looked for them, but in vain. Finally we reached the original site of Camp V. We were surprised to see our Sherpas just a little ahead of us. They had hardly covered a few hundred feet during the whole day!

"What the hell are they doing up there? They ought to have been much higher up," I remarked to Sonam. "There must be something wrong," he replied. Like a column of ants they did not seem to be moving at all and we soon caught up with them.

"Are you all right?" I asked Girmi, anxiously.

"No, Burra Sab, I fell into a crevasse yesterday."

And before I could say anything he added, "But we will come up. Only, I just can't lead any more in this soft snow."

We overtook them and pressed on. "Tomorrow's effort depends on today's progress," I repeated to myself.

The mysterious white wall of Annapurna III, rising like a pinnacle, ice-encrusted and snow-laden, dazzling, radiant and beckoning, was luring us like a lamp drawing a moth towards it. We stopped at the crevasse, down which Sharma and Chaturvedi had dropped 150 feet during our first summit attempt. Its shape had changed but it still looked perilous. Traversing to

its right and cutting a few steps in the adjacent wall, we managed to surmount it.

The weather, once again, took a turn for the worse. It started snowing. About 500 feet beyond the old camp, at a height of 22,300 feet, we decided to halt for the night; Annapurna III stood just over 2,500 feet above us. We pitched two tents, sent our Sherpas back to Camp IV, and Sonam Gyatso and I got into the Meade tent, while Girmi, Kancha and Ang Tshering entered the Arctic tent.

Our supper was a cup of soup, a paratha and a few koftas. We changed our socks and stockings and put on our boots. We were fully dressed and prepared for the morning, only the crampons remained to be fitted.

"Tomorrow is 'D-day'."

"Yes, tomorrow will decide our fate," Sonam Gyatso and I said to each other.

"We should leave at 3 A.M. Do you think, it is too early?" I asked Sonam.

"No, 3 A.M. is not too early, we should leave at three," he agreed.

"All liquids should be prepared and melted now," I advised the Sherpas, who saw to it that our water bottles and thermos flasks were filled before we retired for the night.

It was comforting to have Sonam Gyatso with me; I could rely on his rock-like strength. It is more than friendship that grows in the mountains between two human beings living together, sharing the same difficulties, bound by a common objective.

Clad in our full, warm paraphernalia, we wriggled into our sleeping bags. Snow continued to fall through the night. Sonam kept talking to me and then, suddenly, started snoring. This was nothing unusual, for Sonam was a kind of "snorkel" (different from the gadget in a submarine but producing sounds similar to it). Whenever he slept, he emitted a wide variety of sounds—loud discordant notes; whistling noises and powerful snorts! He was famous for his snoring. Most snores taper off after a few minutes' intensity, but Sonam's had prodigious staying power! I had made it a practice, whenever Sonam shared my tent, to go to sleep before he did. But this time he had stolen a march over me. After half an

hour, when I could no longer endure the cacophony I had to resort to a sleeping pill—the first I took during the expedition.

Heavy snowfall pressed the tent flap against my face and woke me up with its chilly touch. In my impatience I thought it was already 3 o'clock and woke up Sonam.

"Let's get ready, it must be about time," I said. It took Sonam a good fifteen minutes to open his eyes and consult his watch. "It is only 10 o'clock", he grumbled. I cursed myself for waking him as the prospect of once again listening to his nostral sounds was not a pleasant one! We could not get much sleep after that. We dozed off and on, consulting our watches almost every hour. Finally, it was three o'clock. Sonam and I sprang out of our sleeping bags and I ripped open the zip of the tent.

It was distressing to peer outside. It had been snowing incessantly and thick sheets of snow were spread all over the mountain. Our hearts sank. So much in mountaineering depends on the caprices of weather that, at the best of times, it is not possible to predict the outcome of a venture. The weather always remains a big riddle and no amount of determination, planning, skill and courage can make up for its inclemency. Man is helpless, incapable of fighting Nature and his most heroic efforts may be frustrated by a frown of the sky or a growl in the air. What could we do but wait and endure? We did not speak to each other. Disappointed and dejected, we just hoped and prayed in silence. A break in the weather eventually came at 6 a.m. when it stopped snowing. Immediately we rushed out of our tent, not wanting to lose a single moment.

We fixed our crampons, but before setting out on the final trek Sonam Gyatso, the Sherpas and I stood still offering prayers to the Almighty. I remembered my father's advice—he had written to me when I was at the Base Camp—that I must offer "Ardas" (prayers) before starting for the summit.

To save ourselves some effort and conserve our energies, I asked Sherpas Ang Tshering and Kancha to go ahead and make a way for us by stamping down the soft snow. Both of them were very strong Sherpas and could be relied upon for their physical prowess. They led the way by turns, making a trail in the wake of which we followed. They sank knee to waist-

deep in the snow and after two hours of this weary labour, hardly 500 feet above our camp and still more than 2,000 feet below the summit, they were utterly exhausted and just could not go an inch farther. It was awfully lonely when they returned to Camp V, but Sonam and I with Sherpa Girmi continued our fatiguing march. We were now blessed with fine weather; the sky cleared up and bright sunshine brought hope. We moved forward steadily, though laboriously. We made for the East saddle, connected to the summit ridge, as this way we could cover a major portion of the steep climb in the early stages of our march while we were fresh and full of energy. A mystic force, unseen and unknown, was pulling us nearer and nearer to the summit. It seemed as if we had acquired wings—so smoothly were we being drawn up, like a needle yielding to a magnet.

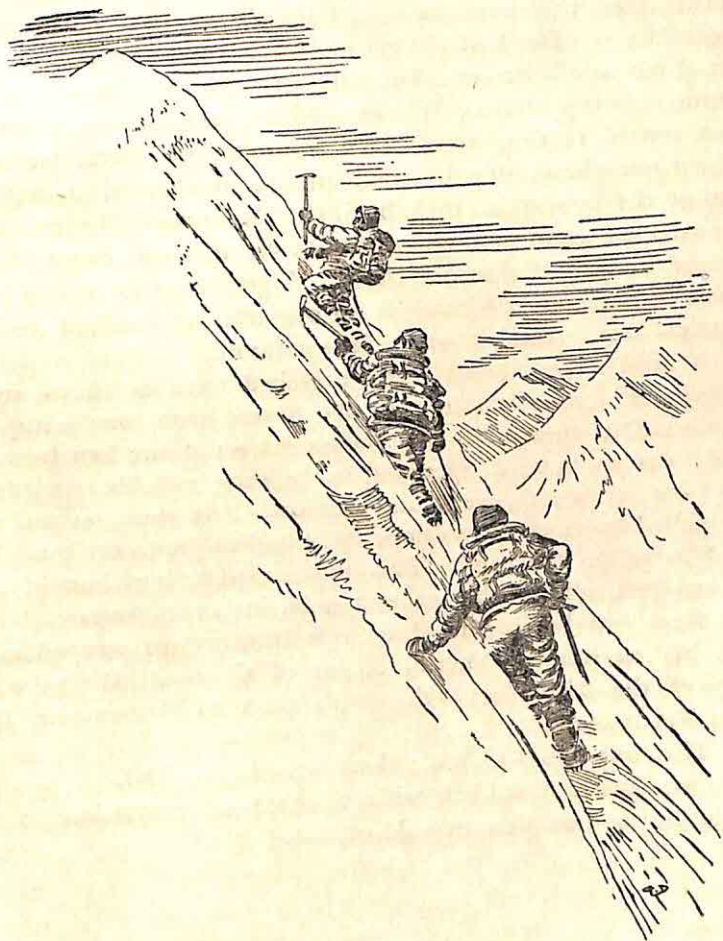
There was a flash-back in my mind. The whole gamut of the past—the sultry heart of Delhi when Mr. Sarin had asked if I had any plans for 1961; planning on Marve Beach; long valley marches; the looting of the Base Camp; the arrival of troops and a myriad other flickering images chased through my fancy. Here, at last, we were nearing the hallowed circle of the summit, the innermost shrine, the holiest of holies. Would we reach the Goddess Annapurna, to touch her sacred crown?

"Crevasse! Crevasse!" Sonam's loud yelling disturbed my reverie. Sonam, who was the strongest of the three of us, was leading the rope. I walked up to him to gaze on a crevasse running horizontally for hundreds of feet, slitting the way. Though it was not very wide, it was on a long steep slope and it was impossible to hop across. I held on to the rope while Sonam attempted a couple of jumps, but every time he slipped into the crevasse and had to be hauled out. Making a long traverse, we succeeded in getting over this hurdle. Another few minutes, and we were on the saddle. We looked at the beautiful Gangapurna peak, barely a mile to the east of Annapurna III. It was now 1 P.M. and the summit was still a good 800 feet above us.

"We will make it," Girmi said reassuringly. The weather was fine and there seemed no doubt that we would achieve our objective. We moved close to the saddle, looked down from the height of the mountain, searching for the fertile

plateau of Pokhrâ, which lay 21,000 feet below us, but could see nothing, as low-lying clouds were curling over the valley, obstructing our view.

After a little rest, we continued our ascent. Another hour passed and we were still struggling to reach the top. Suddenly,



the weather deteriorated again. The sky which had been bathed in bright sunshine for four hours, now turned grey and sullen; bitter squalls burst upon us without warning and the sun withdrew behind a thick veil of mist. It started snowing.

But we had no alternative save to press on. With every step, our feet sank through the thin ice-crust into deep powdery snow. Another hour passed before we were on hard surface. We were now barely 200 feet short of our goal.

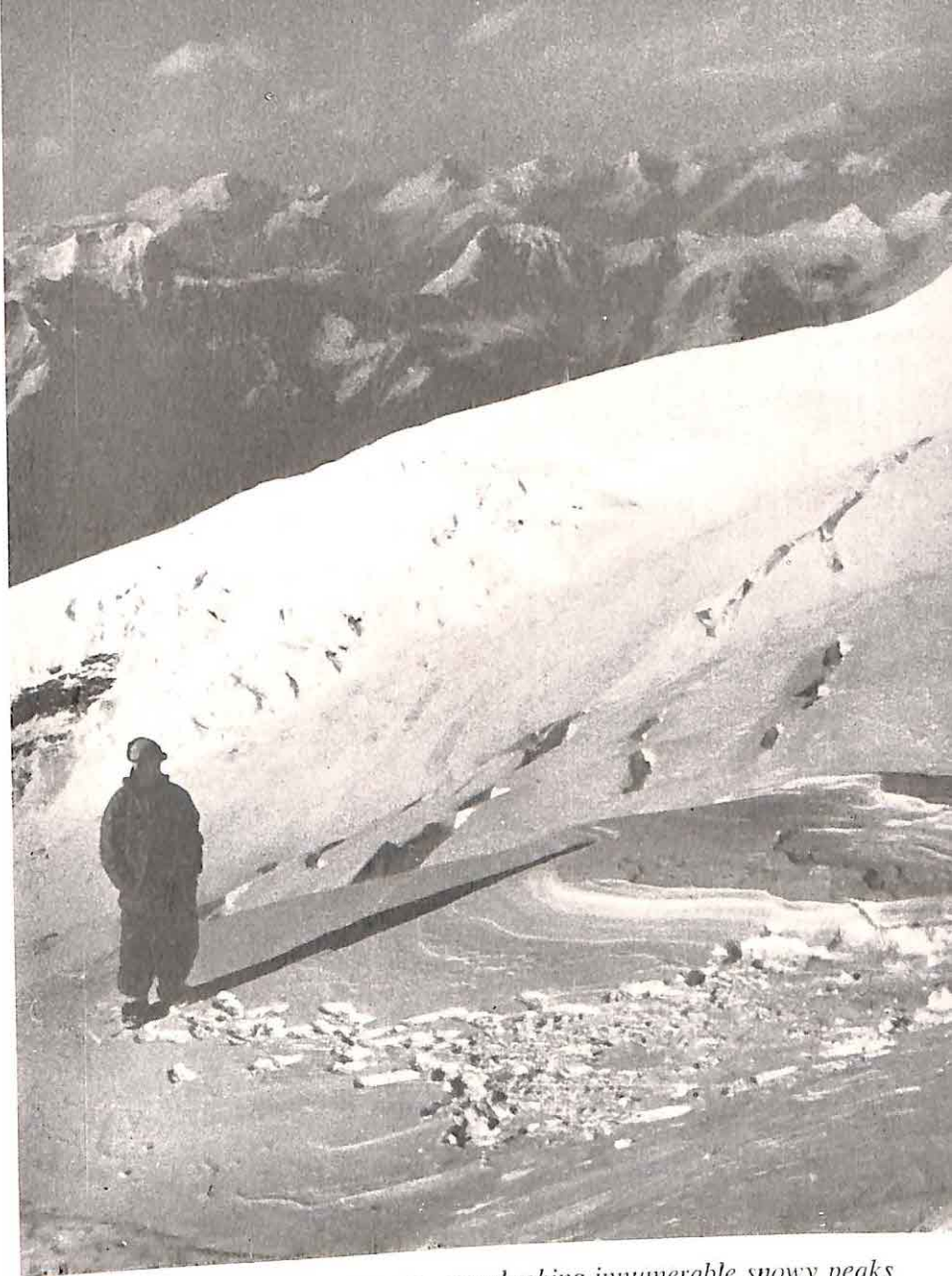
The summit ridge was steep, making it necessary for us to cut steps and belay each other firmly. Below us was the North face of Annapurna III, falling 3,000 feet down in a single sweep. We had always calculated that the last lap of our climb would be easy, but here we were rubbing our noses against a steep climb. We stopped for a final rest. Sonam soon started cutting steps and I improved on them; we continued our climb, step by step, minute by minute, struggling against the mountain, inch by inch. It seemed like eternity. We stopped again and again to suck air into our lungs which seemed to burst within our chests. A gendarme (a rock tower) stood in our way. Skirting it on our left, we climbed up the last few feet. Alas! it was a false summit.

A mild slope, almost level, stretched from north to south and there were a few humps. We moved from one hump to another. Our energy was now flagging; we put one foot forward and then another; it appeared to be such a deliberate effort. Gasping for breath, weak and exhausted, we went on and on, propelled by sheer doggedness. "We had to get to the top. We had to get to the top." This was a maddening thought and it was just not possible to escape its insistent pressure.

Snow was beating hard on our faces as we stepped onto the highest hump. Then.....joy of all joys! We were on top of the 24,858-foot-high virgin peak of Annapurna III! We had made it!

The time was 4-15 P.M.; the date, May 6, 1961.

Our hearts pounded with a sense of exaltation as we embraced one another in wild ecstasy.



*The party moving up again, overlooking innumerable snowy peaks
on the Tibetan border*

The Sherpas cheerfully ferry up the loads





A view of the summit of Annapurna III from Camp IV



The leader hoisting the Indian National Flag, the Nepalese Flag, the Naval Ensign and the Expedition's pennant on the summit



Sonam and Kohli after return from the summit

The brave band of Sherpas





Annapurna III seen after leaving Base Camp

Even after leaving Base Camp, Annapurna III still dominated the scene





A high pass before Muktinath

Loaded yaks during the return march





The famous Muktinath Temple

Drawing water from each of the 108 spouts of water at Muktinath



XIII

AFTER THE PEAK

STANDING on the summit of Annapurna III, our hearts were filled with humility. We were in a different world—everything looked white and pure. With our objective accomplished, there was a feeling of fulfilment. It was, in fact, much more than that. We had reached a perfect, eternal moment, the memory of which we would cherish for ever, living and reliving it for the rest of our existence. Annapurna, "the Goddess of Harvest", had removed all hunger from our bodies and minds. According to Hindu mythology, Goddess Annapurna is often represented as standing on a lotus, with a spoon in one hand and a vessel in the other to dispense food and sustenance. I closed my eyes and felt as if the Goddess were showering her blessings on us. We caught glimpses of other Annapurnas. Maurice Herzog was right: There are always other Annapurnas—not only the peaks in the Annapurna massif, but other peaks, other mountains, other summits which man will always climb to realize himself.

Although worn out and weather-beaten, we were happy that months and months of hard labour, toil and trouble had, at last, been crowned with success. My thoughts went out to the other members of my team. Our victory was their victory too. We were equal partners in this great enterprise. Every one of us, big or small, important or unimportant, had made this moment possible. Individuals do not count on the mountains. It was the whole team that had gained the peak.

To the east lay Manaslu and Himal Chuli, blurred by a steady snowfall. The ridge leading to the icy summit of Machapuchare (a Nepalese term for 'Fish Tail') which Wilfred Noyce considered the most spectacular peak, as well as the

most beautiful, lay 2,000 feet below us. I thought of Wilfred and David Cox who, four years earlier, had climbed to within 100 to 150 feet of its summit before a blinding snowstorm thwarted their efforts. The expedition to Machapuchare had been led by Roberts. The ice-dome of Annapurna I was not far to the west, but we could see only a thin slice of it. It brought memories of the gallant but bitter success of Herzog and Lachanel in 1950. To the east, we saw the steep, triangular snow face of Annapurna II, partially hidden from us. The previous year it had been climbed by a joint British, Indian and Nepalese Services Expedition. I thought of Bonington, Grant and Ang Nyima, who had stood on that summit. Annapurna IV, too, was not visible. All that we could see of it was the faint, thin crescent of its summit. The Germans had climbed it in 1955. The virgin Gangapurna, barely a mile away, with its staggeringly precipitous face, was 800 feet below us. The names of all those who, like us, had stood on the summits of Annapurna raced through my mind. Did they experience the same exultation?

The snowfall, which had begun earlier, now became very severe; it was already getting late. But before we left, we had to go through a few traditional formalities. We hoisted the Nepalese and Indian flags, the Expedition pennant and the Naval Ensign on the summit. Sonam had brought with him a few Buddhist prayer flags. These, too, were planted on the peak. As we were about to march away, Sonam stopped and asked: "How about some photographs?"

"In this weather?"

"Well, we could try."

"O.K., hold on there," I said. I pulled the camera out of my rucksack, but as soon as I opened it, the lens was plastered with snow. Wiping the lens clean with my gloved fingers, I took a number of photographs. All three of us posed in turn till we had used up all eight exposures.

The weather was deteriorating; we had spent nearly 15 minutes on the summit and there was not a single moment to lose. We took leave of Annapurna III; thanked the goddess for her kindness and bounty, the peak for its hospitality and set off on the return journey.

Girmi, who was the last on the rope while ascending, had

now taken the lead; Sonam was in the rear and I kept the middle position. Going down the ice-encrusted mountain wall was much more dangerous than climbing up. Belaying one another firmly, we descended very slowly. Looking down the prodigious North face, I shuddered to think how fatal just one single false move could be. It could mean complete disaster. Ironically, just then I slipped.

Quickly, almost instinctively, I turned, plunging my ice-axe into the wall with all my might, and dug the points of my crampons hard into the solid surface, trying to break the momentum of my fall. Sonam and Girmi also acted with lightning rapidity. I had hardly fallen ten feet or so when they held me securely, belaying skilfully. It took me a good five minutes to regain my breath. Cutting steps, I moved up and fifteen minutes later I was back at the spot from where I had slipped.

The mountain was completely sheathed in fresh, billowy snow, which had effaced all landmarks; poor visibility and lashing snow made our descent excruciatingly difficult. The snowfall became heavier, the sky glowed with lightning, a thunderstorm broke loose; we felt as if the earth would open its deathly jaws and swallow us up. Digging our ice-axes into the snow, we stood stockstill. The fury of the gale offered no respite and we were caught in a fierce blizzard that screeched and screamed high. Nature was at its most pitiless. We were lost in a storm-tossed world of snow and thunder where "life and death no longer seemed isolated, but a part of some pattern woven on the looms of eternity". Girmi became a spectre dancing in front of me and I could only vaguely make out his silhouette. We were shivering like leaves in a storm; we were lost, lost for ever in our small worlds. The tiny flames of our lives flickered; they could be snuffed out any moment by the turbulent elements. Fear clutched our hearts. Sonam prayed to "Guru Rimpochee". He had a rosary given him by the Holy Dalai Lama which he always carried with him. Slowly counting the beads, he offered earnest prayers for life and safety. In spite of the world's materialism, the vanity of man, the power of human reasoning and the agnosticism of the rationalist, the mountains—their heights, grandeur and illimitability—drive you to faith in the supernatural. Man's

thoughts turn to god. The inadequacies of the human personality betray themselves in several ways, forcing man to look and search beyond his ownself. Inevitably, he looks for strength and solace and gets it through faith in a higher and omnipotent power.

Had we desecrated the sanctity of the holy mountain? Were the Manangbhotias right after all? No one spoke a word; we looked at one another in consternation. We lost all hope of life; we prayed silently and fervently.

My mind wandered. I thought of my colleagues in the lower camps; my relations far away in India; the members of the Sponsoring Committee and many others who were expectantly watching our progress and anxiously awaiting the result. Would we ever get back to them? Would they ever know what we had achieved? Perhaps not. Who knows whether Mallory and Irvine climbed Everest? We might meet with the same fate.

I was talking to myself: "Suppose we survive and get back safely, would I return to the mountains again? No, never.... But heavens! How could I say that?.....O God, yes; I



would certainly come again. I could never stay away from those lofty peaks!"

"Come on, get a move on, I am freezing to death," Sonam's resonant voice snapped the thread of my thoughts. The intensity of the snowfall had lessened and visibility was now improving. The worst was probably over. Girmi moved a little, looked around and then stopped.

"Can't see any route," he said. I stepped forward, too, trying to locate a path, but it was futile. We had lost all sense of direction and our route had been completely obliterated.

"Hold on, I will go ahead," said Sonam. I was in a daze; my mind was blank and my senses were benumbed. With a slight improvement in visibility a new streak of hope was born. The lightning had ceased, the thunderstorm had abated and we could see one another. Sonam gave up, saying that he could not make out anything. I tried again. There were no signs of the route. It appeared as if we had been removed to a different mountain; drifts of snow had changed the familiar contours. Were we going to face a night in the open, exposed to cold and, perhaps, death?

After this suspense and torture, luck came our way. Girmi announced gleefully that he had found the route. He ran forward and took the lead from Sonam, asking us to follow him. We had stumbled on to the route; there it lay right in front of us.

"These insects are a nuisance," Sonam complained.

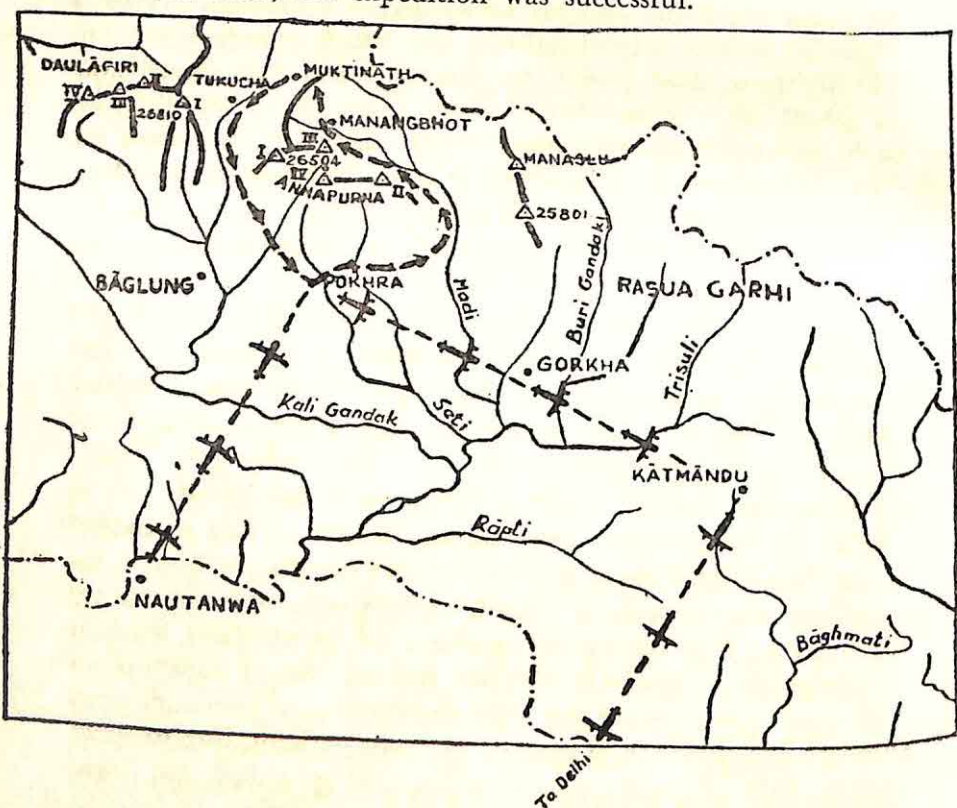
"What insects, there can't be any insects at this altitude!" I said, but I too became aware of an irritating humming. This noise arose every time I pushed my glacier goggles up to my forehead and it ceased the moment I pulled them back in position. Sonam, who had also slid his glasses high up on his head, heard the same buzzing vibrations and attributed them to the presence of insects. It was, perhaps, due to some electrical disturbances caused by lightning which may have been attracted by the metal pieces of our goggles.

It was still snowing, though we could now see clearly. Clambering, struggling and swinging the rope, we groped our way forward rapidly. We kept on shouting for Ang Tshering and Kancha, whom we had asked to come up in the evening

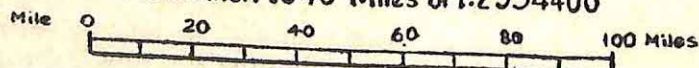
with tea and juice, but they didn't seem to be anywhere about. Nor could we see our camp. I wondered if we had overshot it.

At last, as the light of day was departing, we heard some shouting. Ang Tshering and Kancha were approaching us. We had survived; we had returned to safety. There was a feeling of security, as of a happy home-coming. The Sherpas welcomed us with affectionate hugs and gave us hot tea. We quickly got into our tent and took long juice drinks. Sonam showed a surprising appetite by polishing off a plateful of thukpa (rice pulao).

We were relaxed; tension had lifted from our nerves; job had been done; the expedition was successful.



Scale 1 inch to 40 Miles or 1:2534400



A Route Map of the Expedition

XIV

UNDER MILITARY ESCORT

WE spent a restful night. When we woke up in the morning it was almost seven. It had been snowing all night and our tents had sagged under the heavy weight of snow. Though it had stopped snowing in the morning, dense dark clouds were floating all over, making the mountains look like a gigantic witch's cauldron. It was a gloomy, depressing day, but within ourselves we were happy. We were impatient and restless, wanting to move down as quickly as possible and share the news of our success with others.

Leaving behind the tents, some rations and fuel for the second summit party, we set off from Camp V, where we had spent two memorable nights. We looked back for a final glimpse of Annapurna III, but the summit was hidden behind clouds; we raised our hands in salute, both by way of farewell and in respect and adoration.

Normally, ploughing through the thick, soft carpet of snow would have been tiresome, but the excitement within us, the sense of achievement and accomplishment, the elation of a mission fulfilled, had transformed us, giving us added zeal, energy and strength. Without complaining, we waded through the snow, striding ahead rapidly. As we emerged from the "trough", we saw two Sherpas rushing out of Camp IV to meet us. They were shouting exultantly:

"A-N-N-A-P-U-R-N-A- — A-N-N-A-P-U-R-N-A"

Obviously, they knew that we had gained the summit. They must have seen us near the top the preceding day and Girmi, making signs with his ice-axe pointing to the summit, must have confirmed their guess. The Sherpas were almost delirious

with joy; they hugged us one by one, congratulated us and gave us broad grins and happy smiles. They had brought thermos flasks full of hot tea and orange juice which we drank with great relish. A little rest, and then we were on our way again. The Sherpas informed us that the second summit party had returned to Base Camp. They had seen us attempting the summit. Besides, the weather had taken a turn for the worse in the afternoon.

We instructed Tichy Gyalzen and Nima Tenzing to spend the night in Camp IV, recover the equipment next day from Camp V and then return to the Base Camp. Leaving these two bright, happy-go-lucky Sherpas in Camp IV, we continued our downhill journey. We raced down as fast as we could. When we reached the East Col, it started snowing again. The cold, silvery snow-flakes, smooth and velvety, seemed to caress our faces as we quickened our pace. "Slowly, Burra Sab, slowly," Girmi said breathlessly. The buckled surface on the mountain had changed its appearance. Snow had stuffed all the small crevasses and the brittle, ice-crust that had earlier crackled under our feet was now smothered by feathery snow. At places we glissaded, covering the distance with speed.

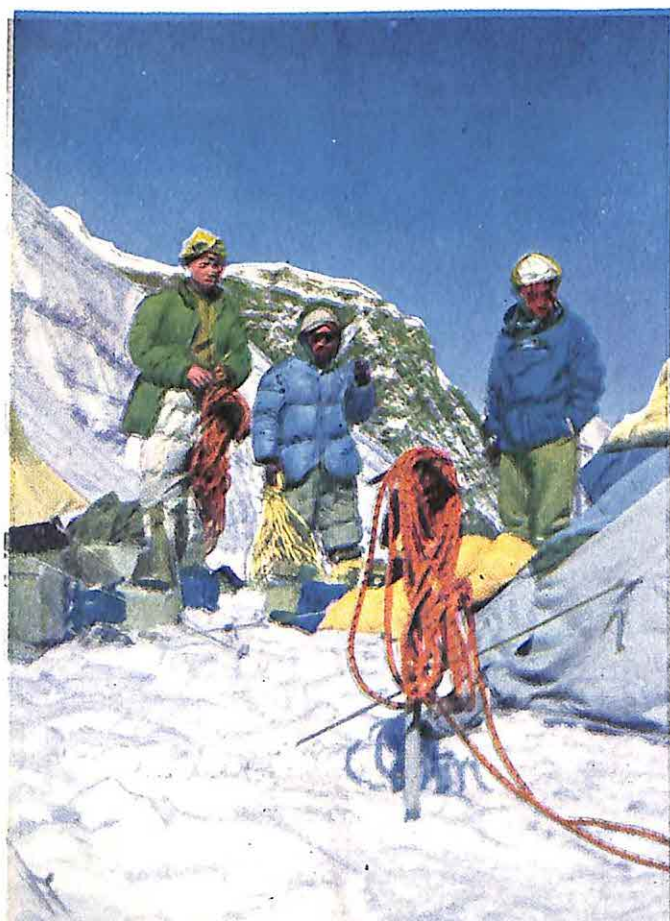
The Janet tent of Camp II had disappeared. It had collapsed and had been entombed in snow. At Camp I our Nepali porters were busy dismantling everything, collecting and packing the tents and our mountaineering gear and stores.

Completely draped in snow, we all looked like Santa Claus. Here and there, the snow on our faces had been fissured by rivulets of perspiration. Tiny icicles, crinkly and hard, hung from my beard and moustache. What could be more appropriate than that we should resemble Father Christmas carrying a big gift—the summit of Annapurna III—to distribute to every one in the Base Camp! We were so absorbed in our thoughts, so deeply lost in our remote worlds, that words were not spoken. Silence became beautiful.

Familiar voices welcoming us broke the stillness of our minds as, after nearly eight hours of walking, stumbling and running, we reached the Base Camp. The news of our success had travelled ahead of us through the Sherpas, and with about a hundred yards yet to go, we were greeted by a big reception party comprising all members of the team



*Between Camps I
and III*



At Camp III



Looking towards North from Camp III



Through the ice terraces between Camps II and III

Camp IV



A view of Annapurna III





North Shelf, Annapurna III



Annapurna massif from Pokhara

and the Sherpas. There was wild excitement. We were embraced, hugged and lifted off our feet. No one spoke a word—speech was hardly necessary.

There were Shekhawat, Chaturvedi and Sharma, members of the second summit party; there was Jungalwala, with his frost-bitten foot, hobbling as best as he could to meet us and, of course, there was our dear Ashoke Nanavati, "the father of the family", with a bright twinkle in his eyes. They had all put in their best effort and our achievement was equally theirs. Equal partners in our victory were the Sherpas, too, who had stood by us through thick and thin. There was a strange glow on every one's face that I cannot forget as long as I live. That was our biggest gift from Goddess Annapurna.

We crowded into the kitchen. The Nepalese troops staying with us had brought a wireless set. This had made us independent of the wireless post at Thonje, which was a two days' march from the Base Camp. I scribbled a brief message: "Annapurna III climbed May 6th at 16.15 hrs. by two members and one Sherpa." Sharma transcribed this in code, and it was immediately flashed to the Foreign Office, the Indian Embassy and the Sponsoring Committee. I had taken care not to mention the names of the members who had attained the summit. That hardly mattered.

Adequate supplies of chang had already been arranged, and it was served liberally while we sat round the fire. The Nepalese Commander, Lieut. Daya Ram, and his wireless operator also joined us in the celebrations. When the party broke up it was past midnight.

We rested and relaxed the next day. The Sherpas from the higher camps returned to the Base Camp in the evening. Heavy snowfall had made the climb from Camp IV to Camp V difficult, and to add to the hazards, an avalanche blocked the route just short of Camp V. Convinced that it was impossible to reach Camp V, they had abandoned the equipment we had left there, but retrieved all our stores from the other camps.

In the night, we lit a huge camp fire. The Nepalese porters vied with one another in fetching big logs of birch and fir. We talked for hours, comfortably perched on ration boxes encircling the crackling blaze, frequently changing positions to avoid the smoke that kept curling up in different directions.

Messages of congratulations started pouring in. The signals came from the President, the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, the Service Chiefs, the Minister for Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, the American Ambassador, the New Zealand High Commissioner, the Indian Ambassador in Nepal and from many others. We were delighted to receive a message—though this reached us much later through the External Affairs Ministry—from Maurice Herzog, the conqueror of Annapurna I. The message from President Dr. Rajendra Prasad read: "My heartiest congratulations to you and members of your party on the success you have achieved in climbing Annapurna III. May the spirit of adventure and purposeful exploration ever continue to inspire India's youth and Services whom you represent to still greater achievements, is my hope and prayer. I wish your party safe return and the best of luck."

*We thanked the President and others for their greetings. The wireless set belonging to the Nepalese troops came in very handy for, before we left the Base Camp, we were able gratefully to acknowledge most of the messages of felicitation.

Conspicuous by its absence was any message from the Sponsoring Committee. We were not a little puzzled by the Committee's silence. Everyone had a seemingly convincing explanation to offer. Mine was that, perhaps, the Sponsoring Committee, quite rightly, looked upon our exploit as in part theirs, and hence thought it neither necessary nor proper to congratulate themselves. As we discovered later, however, the Sponsoring Committee's message was the first to be received by the wireless office at Kathmandu, but as this was followed, in quick succession, by messages from the President, the Prime Minister and others, the operator had clean forgotten to transmit it! When later, in Delhi, I mentioned this to Mr. Khera, Chairman of the Sponsoring Committee, and apprised him of my own personal reaction at the time, his quick retort was "Anyhow, we have climbed the mountain."

We spent a few lazy days at the Base Camp, basking in the sun or lying full length on aromatic pine needles under the shade of birch and fir. The cold melting snow that dripping from overhanging leaves did not interfere with our lotus-eating.

Jungalwala continued to draw large crowds of women and

children outside his tent every morning. The giggling of women and the prattle of children always disturbed our morning slumbers. Fortunately, there was little danger of theft, for these women and children were mostly Tibetan refugees, and an agreeable lot. "Our Phu" visited us often. It was a delight to see his round, moon-like face, wreathed in smiles, peeping through the small open flap in my tent. Our other friend, Tsyangi, did not show up after our return from the summit. We often thought of her and wondered what had become of her.

Nanavati kept himself busy medicating and conducting physiological tests to determine the effects of height on the human system. The troops had enough to occupy them, too, cleaning rifles, maintaining constant vigil and changing guard positions around the camp.

The wireless set in the Camp worked all day long, as congratulatory messages kept pouring in and suitable replies had to be transmitted. Two soldiers continuously rotated a wheel to charge the battery of the set.

We had the novel thrill of writing letters to our relations and friends on the thin, smooth, pale-yellow bark of birch trees that one could peel off in convenient sizes. It reminded us of the ancient days of Indian history when books, State missives and billet-doux were inscribed on "Bhoj Patra".

Much as we enjoyed living in our 'Garden of Eden', our idyllic existence had soon to come to an end. It was time to return, to wind up our camp and strike the road once again—this time homeward bound. We got busy repacking our equipment and reorganizing our stores. We were faced with the major problem of porters. In spite of Lieut. Daya Ram's persuasion, the Manangbhot villagers refused to co-operate in this matter. In fact, they had sent out messages to nearby villages threatening reprisals against anyone who made porters available to us. A few porters did come from Thonje, in response to a wireless message sent out by us, but many of them disappeared, when they sensed the hostility of the local population. I was shocked to hear that the Bhotias' demand for ransom, instead of being dropped, had waxed to Rs. 4,000. The Nepalese officer's orders, however, were to escort

us safely out of the valley heedless of this extortionate demand.

Three days passed and the porter situation became hopeless. We were informed that porters and ponies were available in a village about a day's march from the Base Camp. We decided, therefore, to transport our loads in repeated relays for the first day's march. We had with us only five Nepalese porters. Left to themselves, it would have taken them ten days to transport all the loads. Lieut. Daya Ram, however, came to our rescue. He volunteered to assist with his soldiers. This was indeed a sporting offer, a life-saver, for which we were most grateful.

The first ferry departed on May 11, with fifteen soldiers, five Nepalese porters and seven Sherpas. Ten soldiers accompanied them as an escort. It was arranged that after a night's rest at the next camp-site, fifteen soldiers would return the following day along with the porters and the Sherpas, while the rest would stay on guard at the new camp. The caravan departed very early in the morning with Sharma and Sonam. We bade them good-bye. While Sharma was neatly attired, Sonam wore a woollen shirt and his long woollen underpants. Boots, cap and rucksack completed the ensemble! He presented a ludicrous sight as he stood beside the camp fire in this unorthodox get-up, issuing last-minute instructions. Sonam was quite unperturbed and with his usual good humour and cherubic smile, joined in our laughter, explaining that his clothes had been packed before he had had time to change. Gallantly, he waved *au revoir* to us. To pull his leg, we offered him extra protection. The Manangbhotias, who held him personally responsible for payment of the ransom money, would pounce upon him, we told him!

The second ferry had been planned for May 12. But it turned out that the new camp site was farther than we had expected, and the porters, Sherpas and soldiers returned late in the evening, much too exhausted to be able to make a second trip the next morning. We then decided to leave, all in a body, carrying as much as we could, after the first party had been given a day's rest. Fifteen soldiers escorted us while ten soldiers and Lieut. Daya Ram stayed behind to join us a day later.

We left the Base Camp on May 13. It was a sad parting; we were reluctant to leave the place, which, despite endless troubles and worries, had been our home for a long time. It was placed in such a beautiful setting that every one of us, without exception, would have preferred to stay on.

We trooped out in a long line, with armed soldiers on either side. The road lay through Manangbhot village, and though we had little doubt that the presence of the armed escort would prevent any untoward incidents, Lieut. Daya Ram exercised every caution and care. Just as we were leaving the last field of the village behind, there was a patter of running feet and a familiar voice was heard: "Bolo.....Indian.....Navy.....ki.....jai." It was "Our Phu", with a broad grin on his face. We gave him some sweets and affectionately took leave of him, wishing him well.

We were carrying heavy loads, the maximum that one could take. Each of us carried 55 to 60 lbs., and some much more. The toughness of our Sherpas was truly remarkable. It was a hot sunny day and each of them carried about 100 lbs. on his back. They went much faster than we and reached the camp nearly an hour and a half ahead of us. After some tea and rest, they surprised us by coming back in the afternoon to meet us! They insisted on relieving us of our loads for the rest of the way. They had already done more than their share of work; but by now, most of us were so spent that we were in no mood to argue with them and gratefully accepted their kind and thoughtful offer.

Our new camp, at an altitude of nearly 14,000 feet, was ten to twelve miles outside Manangbhot. It was in a barren, arid location, not to be compared in beauty with our Base Camp, but a ridge in the vicinity afforded an excellent panoramic view of Annapurna III. We settled down here happily, awaiting the arrival of the Lieutenant and the promised transport.

XV RETURN JOURNEY

WE waited the whole day for our stores to arrive and hoped that the porters and yaks, arranged for from Jomson through a special messenger, would come soon. But it was a useless wait, and as the hours passed by, all that we could do was to read, listen to the radio or watch the yaks grazing on the slopes.

Next morning we were up and about early, still waiting for our yaks. At last, they were in sight, a slow rambling procession, together with a few ponies and porters. Within an hour, the loads had been distributed and the caravan was under way. We decided on a short march for that day because the only possible halting place before the pass was a few miles away. Here, there was a large grassy valley between precipitous cliffs, through which freezing winds made rapier thrusts. The height was about 14,500 ft.

Soon after sunset, the rest of the Nepali troops, led by Lieut. Dayaram, also arrived from Manangbhot. When Dayaram was leaving the Base Camp, Tsyangi, whom he had not met but had vaguely heard of as the Bhotia girl who had helped Lama during his imprisonment, had approached him and asked to be allowed to carry a load. When she was told that there were no more loads left, she had broken down, weeping like a child. Dayaram, thereupon had given her small odd loads to carry. He now told us that Tsyangi would soon be amongst us. We complimented him on his understanding of human nature; our admiration for this very likeable officer was greatly enhanced. Very soon Tsyangi herself turned up and, seeing us all knotted round the fire, her face blossomed into a smile. She set down her small load and shook hands with each one of us. It was extraordinarily touching—she had followed us

across miles of rugged, inhospitable country, just to say good-bye.

In these regions, there was a constant, virulent westerly wind, and as we mounted our ponies and began the climb to the pass, it smote us full and cold in the face. We could do no better than trust to the good-sense of our ill-fed, sickly-looking horses, who had the disconcerting habit of picking upon the most dangerous routes! Drifts of snow began to appear, our horses sank knee-deep in it. At places, the snow was soft, melting into icy trickles, but with a good deal of fierce kicking, the horses leaped over the incipient streams to safety. Here, too, the ponies displayed complete unconcern for the comfort and feelings of their riders, who tugged and twitched in vain. They crossed when and where they pleased, and no effort on our part would make them change their mulish minds!

The road plunged down most of the way. We could not see Muktinath as yet, but we went cheerfully downhill, each step bringing us nearer to our homes. The sturdy yaks plodded along with heavy steps, close beside us, stolid but certain. To them it was just one of the many journeys, a familiar feature of their existence. We crossed the 16,000-foot high Thorungse Pass and descended to Muktinath.

Sacred Muktinath is situated at a height of 13,000 ft. and is visited every year by several thousands of pious Hindu pilgrims. For the Nepalese, it ranks with Gosainkund, Pashupati and Riti—the three other great holy places of the Hindus. It owes its sanctity to the presence of the thrice-sacred "Shaligram". The temple is built in the style of a Nepalese pagoda. A recent addition to it is an image of Vishnu. Shaded by pines, skirted by silvery, softly-murmuring streams and with the snowy peaks of Nilgiri and Dhaulagiri providing a backdrop, it is a picturesque and sequestered spot. One hundred and eight spouts of clear mountain streams play into a sacred tank in the temple courtyard. A drink from each one of these streams is a 'must' for every devout Hindu or Buddhist.

Another interesting feature of Muktinath is the Buddhist Gomba nearby. This is a sacred place for Buddhists. It dates back to the days of Ashoka, when Buddhism spread northwards. There were many nuns looking after this Gomba.

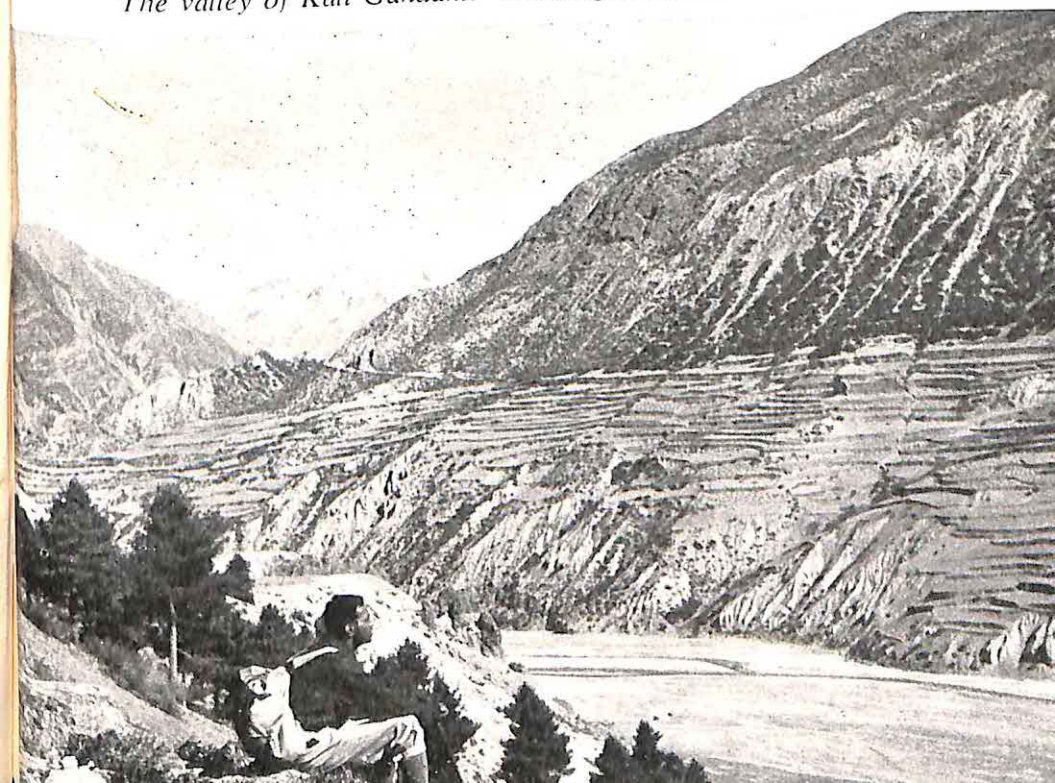


They took us inside the shrine, which was dark and dank. There was an idol of the Buddha, with a few butter lamps burning in front of it.

On May 16, we reached Jomson, 9,000 feet high, from where our escorting troops had come. They were glad to be back in their barracks. All day since we left Muktinath, we had been in the vast, awesome gorge of the Kali or Krishna Gandaki. Along its huge river-bed, over a mile wide in places, we had travelled, still astride our wilful chargers. The thick water of the Kali rolled sluggishly like a python along the sides of high cliffs of yellow gravel. Behind them rose wildly eroded hills of slate-blue, mauve and orange, fading into the inky blue of the distance. In that dry season, the river



*The distant Dhaulagiri range comes in to view from Mukinath
The valley of Kali Gandaki. Dhaulagiri can be seen in the background.*

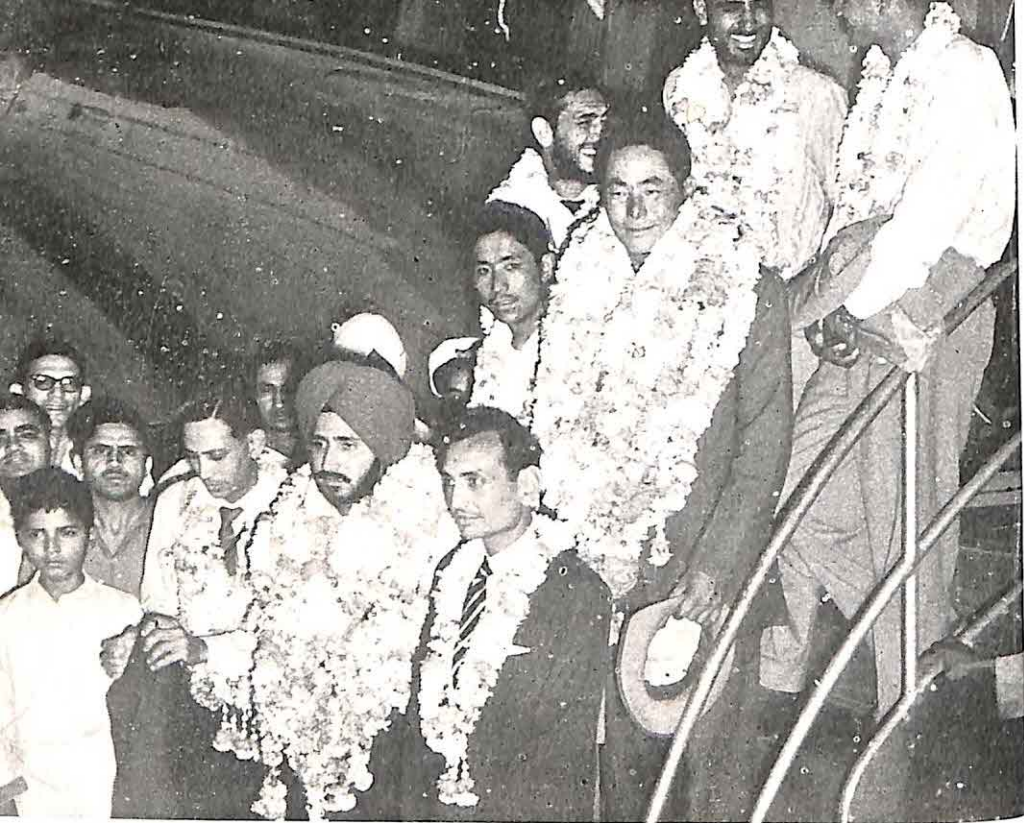




A village belle seen on the way to Tukucha



Through Lete woods



*The party members at Safdarjung (Delhi) airport
After landing, the party members with relations*

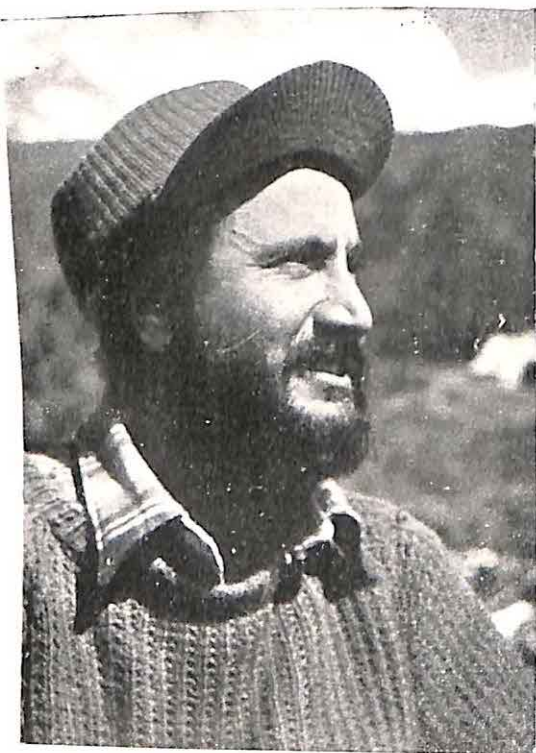




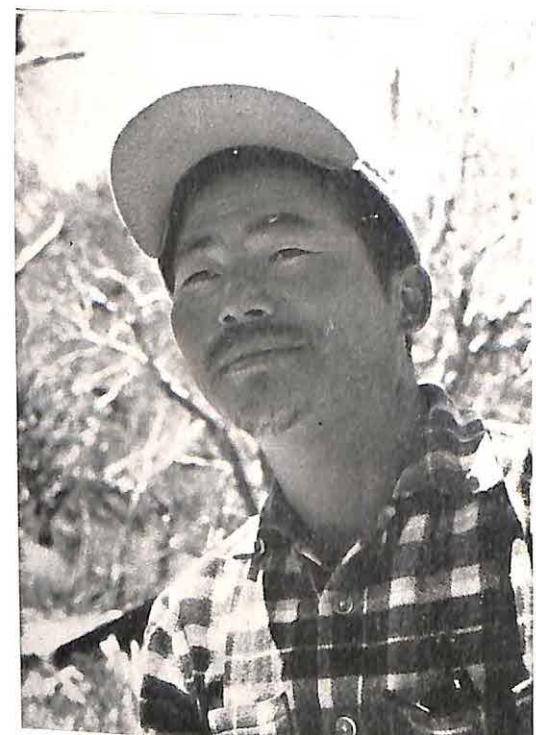
The party with the Prime Minister, Mr. Nehru, at a reception given by him

*The Prime Minister with the members of the summit team—Kohli,
Sonam Gvatso and Sonam Girmi*





*Instructor-Lieutenant
M. S. Kohli, I.N.*



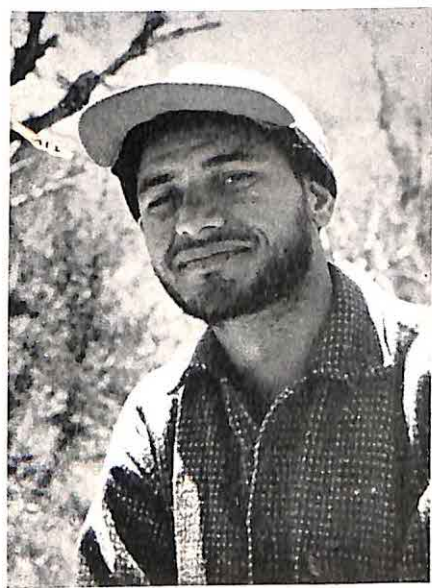
Sonam Gyatso



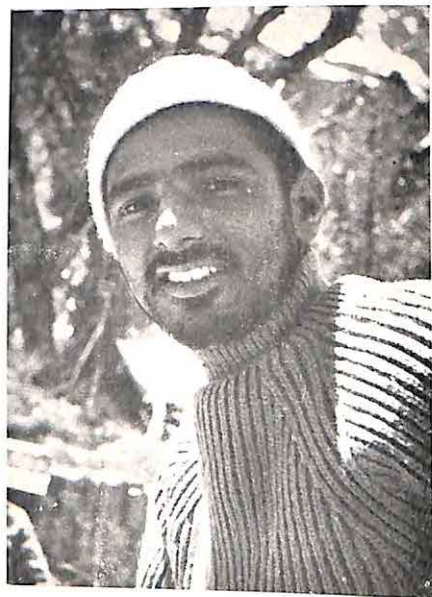
Sonam Girmi



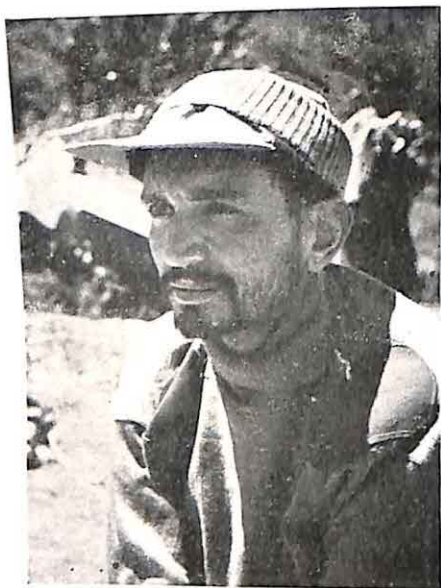
Capt. A. B. Jungaiwala



K. P. Sharma



Lt. V. S. Shekhawat



Flt. Lt. P. C. Chaturvedi



Dr. A. N. D. Nanavati



*The Liaison Officer, Bal Bahadur
Lama*



*Lt. Daya Ram, the Platoon Com-
mander of Nepalese troops*

occupied a small portion of its bed, but during the monsoons, it swells and fills the entire valley. Its waters are an ugly, dark, muddy grey, which accounts for the name "Kali" or "Gandaki". Strong, dust-swirling winds are a peculiarity of the Kali Gandaki. These winds start blowing in the forenoon and peter out towards the evening. Our eyes smarted painfully after the day's march, as much from the velocity of the wind as the dust that it carried.

To guard against these dusty gales, we had put on our wind-proof suits, covered our eyes with enormous goggles and pulled tight balaclavas over our heads. Nevertheless, we were smeared with dust and looked like bandits. Even Jungalwala, who had been following us at a distance and joined us later, mistook us for Manangbhotias!

Our impatience to reach our homes increased hourly. We kept counting the days of the march back to Pokhra, then Kathmandu and finally Delhi, and home! The road descended steadily through a beautiful and picturesque part of Nepal, past Lete, described by Maurice Herzog as being like a Chamoix village in his native Alps. We had to pass through Tukcha, Dana, and Ghāsa and a host of other attractive and prosperous villages of the "Thakalis", as the inhabitants of Thakola are known.

Tukcha was a big village bristling with commercial activity. The place abounded with "Bhaties" run by Thakalis; and prayer flags fluttered all over. The village had one long bazar. Women wore coloured aprons, they had Mongolian faces with high cheek-bones. Gradually, the frequency of human habitation increased and we met more and more people on the roads, bent under loads of wood, salt or grain, bound for some distant market place, many marches away. The vegetation changed; we had seen the last of the pine and fir trees; dense "terai" type of flora and fauna began to appear. The increasing heat of the lower valleys was oppressive; we found it particularly so after our sojourn among the snows.

At Dana, we had our first bath, after a long time, in a cool stream. We squatted and bathed ourselves with a lot of splash and dash. A liberal use of Nanavati's talcum powder, which had a particularly pleasing fragrance, completed a lavish toilet by mountain standards!

On May 22, we saw before us the flat, level plains of the Pokhara Valley. Starting at six in the morning, We rapidly descended the last hill and found ourselves on the outskirts of Nepal's second largest town. Here we had to wait for a few hours, as our host, Major Inder Singh of the Indian Pension Camp, and prominent local citizens had arranged a reception for us. They had not expected us so early and the reception had been fixed for five in the evening. We were received by the "Bara Hakim" and garlanded by many well-wishers. A blaring brass band ensured that a large crowd collected and followed us. Thousands of people joined the procession. The people of Pokhara had a delightful way of welcoming us. They threw coloured powder on us wherever we went. For the first two days, we moved about with a thick coating of multi-coloured powders.

The high cliffs and summits of the Himalayan fortress were already behind us. By now we had described a complete circle of the Annapurna massif, seen its many magnificent peaks, climbed the last of its major ones and we could now look upon the distant ranges with a new familiarity and nostalgic warmth. From where we were, Annapurna III looked like a sitting white elephant. We gazed eagerly hoping that our chartered Dakota would arrive soon. All our equipment had been sorted out and repacked; some of it had to go back to the Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling, some had to be returned to the Geological Survey in Calcutta and the remainder had to go back with us to Delhi.

On May 25, we anxiously paced the grassy air-strip at Pokhara, waiting for our Dakota. But a thunder-squall with gales and pouring rain which ripped the roofs off houses and converted the airfield into a swift-flowing stream, postponed our departure by a day.

Next day, we took off for Kathmandu. At the Nepalese capital we walked into a round of generous official and private parties which extended for many days and continued in Delhi, Bombay and other towns on our return to India. We had the privilege of meeting Their Majesties the King and Queen of Nepal, at a reception given by our Ambassador there, Mr. Harishwar Dayal, and his charming wife. At the airport,

we had been received warmly and ceremoniously by the Indian population of Kathmandu.

We had to take final leave of our liaison officer. He had become an integral part of our expedition; parting from him was full of sadness. He had played an important part in our great adventure and had put his heart and soul into his work. It was with heavy hearts that we bade him good-bye.

Here we also met the unhappy members of the Japanese expedition to Langtang Lirung who had had to abandon their attempt on the mountain after a fatal avalanche had swept their leader and two Sherpas to a tragic end. I doubt if it will ever be possible to forget the grief-stricken faces of the members of the Japanese team.

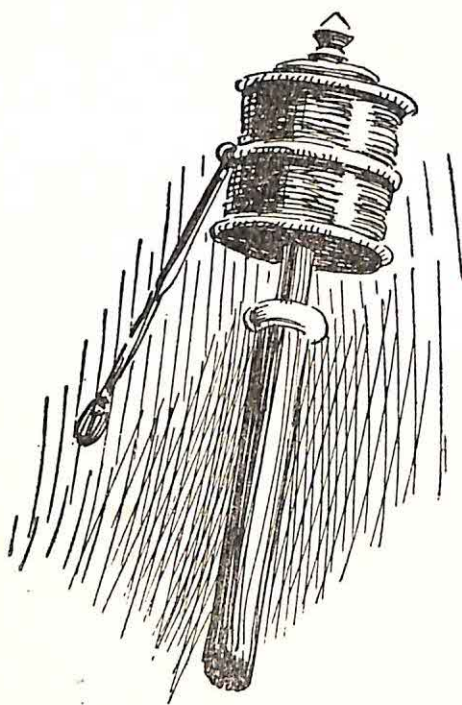
After two hectic days in Nepal's capital, we boarded another Dakota on the last lap of our journey back to Delhi.

The adventure had ended. Our eventful journey was coming to a close. Looking back, there was much to reminisce about. Within a short period, we had seen a lot and experienced a great deal. It was a mixed bag of joys and sorrows—there were moments of deep despair as well as of extreme ecstasy. Happiness and the glory of achievement mingled with trials and troubles. How true it was to life, which is itself an amalgam of the rich and the base, wisdom and folly, hope and fear, pleasure and pain.

We had much to be grateful for—we had had the distinction of attaining a virgin Himalayan peak, hitherto unexplored and untrodden by man. In retrospect, we felt that the weather had on the whole been kind to us. We had suffered no casualties and, except for Jungalwala's minor frost-bite, we had had no serious ailments, no broken bones and no physical or mental decay attributable to high altitude or intense cold. The whole team was in good health. We could not have asked for more. The difficulties that we had experienced were a part of the game.

We were longing to get back to Delhi, back to our hearths and homes. The roots of man lie in his home. These ties are strong, though imperceptible. Perhaps, nowhere except in the unfathomable silence and solitude of mountain spaces does one fully feel the tug and tear of this force. Nevertheless, we were returning with exhilarating memories of the

comradeship of the high mountains. Nothing could take away from us the pride and joy of hardships, shared and surmounted cheerfully and stout-heartedly. Nothing could erase from our minds the images of those barren, snow-bound wastes, where the thunder of the avalanche and the whine of the wind are the only sounds, where nature and God reign supreme. Our hearts will always yearn for those distant heights which hold out the inextinguishable promise of romance and excitement. Their enigmatic peaks will ever beckon us to new adventures.



APPENDIX 'A'

ESTIMATES

Item	Estimated Expenditure
	Rs.
Climbing equipment	5,000.00
Clothing and woollen items	2,000.00
Indigenously produced stores	1,500.00
High-altitude Sherpas	6,000.00
Porters	15,000.00
Food	6,000.00
Medicines	1,000.00
Photography	1,500.00
Fuel and Firewood	1,000.00
Post and Telegraph charges (including mail runners)	1,000.00
Travelling and incidental expenses	2,000.00
Transport charges	2,000.00
Royalty, pay and expenses in connection with Nepalese Liaison	
Officer	5,000.00
Contingencies	5,000.00
Insurance Fee	1,000.00
TOTAL ..	55,000.00

The above estimates were worked out for a period of 60 days, which was expected to be the total duration of the Expedition. But later, considering that this period might not be adequate, we reckoned on the basis of 80 days, and the expenses on food and Sherpas consequently went up proportionately. All climbing equipment was loaned from the Jayal Memorial Stores, for which we were required to pay only washing and repair charges. The actual expenditure incurred was about Rs. 60,000.



APPENDIX 'B'

EQUIPMENT

(By K. P. Sharma)

Apart from the weather and 'luck', the success of any expedition depends much on careful selection of equipment. A weak piton hammer or leaking kerosene oil container can defeat or hold up an expedition, just as a weak strap of a crampons broken beyond repair a few hundred feet short of the goal, can frustrate the final effort.

We had carefully considered our equipment requirements. We had to ensure that (i) nothing was missed out whose omission we might regret later (ii) there was nothing surplus which could unnecessarily increase our expenditure and portage.

Our equipment was divided into three categories, namely, personnel, camp and general. Details of equipment under each category are given with short notes on certain important items.

(1) *Crampons, adjustable and non-adjustable* : These were manufactured by the Indian Ordnance Factories. Owing to slight metallurgical defects, some of the crampons used to bend. We, therefore, reserved the six best pairs for the summit party. The straps on crampons were of either leather or cotton. Cotton straps were a nuisance, especially in bad weather. They became stiff in the frost and could not be untied till hot water had been poured on them to make them soft.

(2) *Reindeer boots* : These were of Swiss make and were very warm and comfortable. We carried only five pairs of these. They were used by some members above camp IV.

(3) *Climbing boots with covers* : These boots, made by the Bata Shoe Company, had been used by the Indian Everest Expedition of 1960. We were surprised to find that, despite two months of continuous use on Everest, they withstood the strain of the Annapurna III Expedition as well. These boots had very strong soles and separate woollen inner linings and inner soles, which were very comfortable when they were dry, but when the inner soles became wet, it was difficult to dry the boots, and despite every precaution, they froze during the nights. These boots were fitted with hooks on the upper seams of the sole for boot covers. These hooks need strengthening, because, when pulled, they are liable to come off.

(4) *Approach March Boots* : These boots, designed by the Batas, were very light and comfortable. One of the Sherpas unwisely used these boots even at an altitude of 20,800 ft., but by then the stitching on the seams had come off. It was exceedingly risky to use them above the snow-line.

(5) *Camp Shoes* : These were of two types : Moccasin and eiderdown camp shoes. They were designed by the Ordnance Factories. The eiderdown type were more comfortable in the higher Camps.

(6) *String Vests* : This useful item, manufactured by the Ordnance Factories, traps a lot of air next to the skin for insulation. Also, it absorbs body

sweat at high altitudes and does not let one's shirt get wet, thus reducing the chances of pneumonia or other infections due to cold.

(7) *Windproof Suits* : These suits, weighing about 3 lbs. 12 ozs., were made of Wyncol or 5-oz. fabric, and provided good protection against the wind. I may be advisable for future expeditions to try out specially processed Terylene fabric, which is much lighter.

(8) *Eiderdown Suits* : Weighing each about 6 lbs., these were made of Indian and imported nylon fabric. They were very warm and comfortable, though the Indian fabric needs to be made down-proof.

(9) *Snow Goggles* : Specially designed by the Ordnance Factories, they provided complete protection against harmful ultra-violet rays and glare and had a normal range of vision. In addition to these, we had 10 pairs each of the Suval and motor cycle types of goggles. Both these proved very satisfactory.

(10) *Sleeping Bags (inner and outer)* : The sleeping bags were stuffed with eiderdown of a very fine quality. The nylon fabric used was of French and Indian manufacture. The bags were so warm that one was adequate.

(11) *Air mattresses* : Made out of a strong, easily inflatable and deflatable rubberised material, these were manufactured in India. The inflators, also supplied by the same firm, gave good service.

(12) *Ruck-sacks* : These, with steel frames, were made by the Ordnance Factories. The ruck-sacks were big, with two large side-pockets and one back-pocket. They were provided with additional straps to secure the ice axe and bulky loads. A polythene inner lining was provided with each ruck-sack to prevent damp getting at the contents.

(13) *Ice Axes* : These were manufactured by the Ordnance Factories. They were light and handy. In a few axes, the picks wore off slightly. There is need for some improvement in the metal processing.

(14) *Mess Tins, etc.* : In addition to being used as plates, our mess tins were also used in the higher camps as cooking utensils. For lower altitude, we had enamel plates. As mugs and spoons are frequently lost in an expedition, we had taken sufficient spare spoons and plastic mugs for replacements.

(15) *Woollen Garments* : For use at high altitudes, it is always advisable to procure 4-ply wool and get it doubled before knitting. Garments knitted out of this double 4-ply wool are warmer and last longer. We had full-sleeve woollen vests and long underpants. Over these, we put on heavy woollen shirts and "plus-four" (climbing) trousers. It is essential to have an additional round patch stitched onto the trouser seat to keep the underwear dry. Shirts must have two flap-pockets and the trousers, four pockets.

(16) *Tents* : To meet our requirements at various camps, we had taken four types of tents, the 12-man Mess tent, the Jamet, the Meade and the Arctic. The mess tent was roomy enough for eight people. It was our dining, conference and recreation tent during the march, at the Base Camp and, later, at Camp I.

The four-man Jamet tent offered the advantage of more room for stowing away articles in the space in the centre, which also served as an ideal kitchen at the higher camps. The two-man Arctic and Meade tents were very light and were

fitted with inner lining. The disposition of our tents at the various camps was as follows :—

Base Camp	Large improvised tent—1, Jamet—1 and Meade tents—2.
Camp I	Mess tent—1, Jamet—1 and Arctic—1.
Camp II	Jamet—1, and Meade tents—2
Camp III	Arctic—1, and Meade tents—2
Camp IV	Meade tents—2
Camp V	Meade—1, and Arctic—1.

(17) *Butane Gas Containers with Burners* : We had imported 12 medium-size Butane gas containers from Switzerland. Each of these container lasts for 24 hours. They were extremely useful and easy to operate.

18. *Stoves* : Our Primus Stoves were specially designed by M/s Prabhat Stove Co. and tested to suit the requirement at high altitudes. They were fitted with a self-pricking device which automatically removed the carbon deposited by burning. These stoves worked satisfactorily. We also had packets of Meta fuel which was used for lighting our stoves and Petromax lamps.

APPENDIX 'C'

PROVISION OF FOOD

(By V.S. Shekhawat)

Provision of food for the expedition was made on the basis of the experience gained during the 1960 Everest Expedition. Most of the quantities were computed and compiled carefully, though some modifications were made after ascertaining the likes and dislikes of members. Much of the tinned provisions were generously donated to us by manufacturers, as also chocolates, powdered milk, *atta*, etc. The remaining dry provisions were purchased locally in Delhi by Sonam and myself when we went round in a mad swirl to shops in the old city.

The provision of food was planned to meet the following three requirements :—

- (a) Low altitude;
- (b) High altitude; and
- (c) Sherpa rations (low altitude).

In the low-altitude rations, each member was allowed at the rate of about 64 oz. of food per day, comprising a nutritious and well-balanced diet of meat, cereals, vegetables, beverages, sugar, salt, butter, milk, cheese, jams, sweets, chocolate, condiments and, of course, rice or *atta*. Fresh mutton, chickens, eggs and vegetables for daily consumption were procured locally.

The low-altitude rations for the Sherpas allowed for a daily intake of about 50 oz., consisting of essential foodstuffs like rice, *atta*, meat, lentils, sugar, milk, ghee or butter, vegetables, etc. In addition, there was *Tsampha*, the staple diet of the Himalayan folk.

High-altitude rations were the same for members and Sherpas and were based on a daily intake of 38 oz. These consisted of foodstuffs with high nutritional and energy values. There were fruit cakes, dates, dried fruit, sweets, chocolates, Ovaltine, Horlicks, *Tsampha*, tinned meat, fruit juice, glucose, biscuits, salt tablets, etc. These were packed in three-man day packs, each weighing about 7 lbs. Six of these packs, called "Compos", or composite rations, were then packed in plywood boxes to make high-altitude loads, each of about 45 lbs.

In the matter of food, eight members, including the liaison officer and 12 Sherpas, were catered for. The man-days thus worked out were as follows :—

	Men	Days	Man-Days	Approx. weight in lbs.
(i) Low Altitude	8	45	360	1,462
(ii) High altitude	20	35	700	1,853
(iii) Sherpas	12	45	540	1,646
(iv) Miscellaneous	—	—	—	339
				5,300

(This includes packing material 65 porter-loads for valley march and 35 loads for high altitude).

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
21.	Sweets	1	23
22.	Chocolates	1	23
23.	Gur/Misri/Raisins	$\frac{1}{2}$	11
24.	Onions-raw	1	23
25.	Soups	1	23
26.	Chillies	}	23
27.	Salt		
28.	Condiments		
29.	Besan (for Pakoras)/Biscuits	1	23
30.	Fruit cake and dried nuts	1	23
TOTAL		64 $\frac{3}{4}$	1,462

High-altitude rations

Sl. No.	Item	Qty. per man-day in oz.	Total Qty. for 700 man-days in lbs.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1.	Sugar	8	350
2.	Corn-flakes, Mango-flakes etc.	$\frac{1}{2}$	22
3.	Milk	4	175
4.	Jam	$\frac{3}{4}$	33
5.	Cheese	1	44
6.	Fish (tinned)	1	44
7.	Meat/Kcema/Roghan Josh/Sausages/Liver	3	131
8.	Soup cubes	2	88
9.	Chocolate	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	66
10.	Dried Fruit	2	83
11.	Sweets and Toffee	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	66
12.	Cocoa	$\frac{1}{2}$	22
13.	Ovaltine, Chocolate (drinking)	$\frac{1}{2}$	22
14.	Fruit cake	1	44
15.	Lemon & orange powder	1	44
16.	Salt tablets	—	—
17.	Biscuits (sweet)	3	131
	Biscuits (saltish)	1	44
18.	Tinned fruit	4	175
19.	Tinned vegetables	1	44
20.	Tsampa	2	88
21.	Pinnis (laddoos)/Petha	1	44
22.	Glucose	2	88
TOTAL ..		39	1,953

Sherpa Rations

Sl. No.	Item	Qty. per man-day in oz.	Total Qty. for 540 man-days in lbs.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1.	Sugar	8	270
2.	Tea	$\frac{3}{4}$	25
3.	Milk	2	68
4.	Jam	1	34
5.	Rice	8	270
6.	Lentils	6	203
7.	Vegetable (fresh & tinned)	3	101
8.	Wheat flour	8	270
9.	Tsampa	4	135
10.	Ghee/Butter	3	101
11.	Meat (dehydrated or fresh)	4	135
12.	Lemon crystals	$\frac{1}{2}$	17
13.	Chillies, masala (spices) etc.	$\frac{1}{2}$	17
TOTAL ..		48 $\frac{3}{4}$	1,646

Miscellaneous items

Sl. No.	Item	Quantity
1.	Cheese	10 lbs.
2.	Honey	15 lbs.
3.	Macaroni	5 lbs.
4.	Ovaltine	10 lbs.
5.	Coffee	10 lbs.
6.	Chocolates	20 lbs.
7.	Assorted soups	100 pits (10 lbs.)
8.	Glucose	50 lbs.
9.	Chutney/Achar	10 bottles
10.	Tomato juice	25 tins
11.	Orange juice	25 tins
12.	Pinnis (laddoos)	31 lbs.
13.	Sohan halwa	10 lbs.
14.	Maida	20 lbs.
15.	Baking powder	5 lbs.
16.	Yeast	3 lbs.
17.	Gur	50 lbs.
18.	Lemon & Orange juice powder	20 lbs.
TOTAL ..		339 lbs.

The above list was compiled allowing for a period of 80 days in the field. The time actually spent out in the mountains was only about 65 days. Had we spent the full planned period, however, some of the items would still have remained in excess. These were :—

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) "Compos" rations | 40 lbs. excess |
| (b) Cereals-cornflakes etc. | 20 lbs. excess |
| (c) Glucose | 40 lbs. excess |
| (d) Custard powder | 6 lbs. (not used at all) |
| (e) Yeast | 3 lbs. |

The following items remained deficient and should have been increased by the quantities shown against each :—

- | | |
|------------|---------|
| (a) Butter | 15 lbs. |
| (b) Ghee | 25 lbs. |
| (c) Sweets | 20 lbs. |
| (d) Honey | 10 lbs. |

The following general observations may be useful to future Indian expeditions. Tinned *fruits and juices* proved extremely popular and, at higher altitudes, they formed the main diet of some members. Tinned *meat*, after some time, was not liked by any one. It had to be thrown away. But a few tins of *mutton biryani*, inadvertently supplied to us instead of meat (Roghan Josh), proved delicious and were greatly appreciated at high altitudes. Similarly, tinned "*Laganshala*" for vegetarians was difficult to eat. Here, too, *vegetable biryani* may be the answer. Powdered milk was satisfactory, except for the plastic bags which tended to break in transit. Pickles were a great favourite below the snow-line and on the marches. We ran short of *ghee and butter*, because members preferred "parathas" to "chapaties". Because pancakes were popular, we experienced a shortage of honey.

As a high-altitude variation, some members tried the experiment of taking mince-stuffed "parathas" and meat balls from the base camp. These were found to be very tasty after heating and even after three or four days. A few member found them too dry to eat and preferred the Tibet "*thukpa*" which is a gruel-meat-and-rice preparation.

Surprisingly, nobody liked *chocolates* at high altitudes, though Indian tidbits like "Am papai" (sweet mango flakes) etc. were greatly appreciated and are worth including in the "Compos". The various *halwas* we had taken, like *Karachi*, *Sohan*, *Gajar*, etc. were too rich, though tasty, and were eaten during the approach march. They could not be kept beyond a week or so. *Petha*, even when dry and old, could be eaten with relish.

The packing of foodstuffs was done in such a way that only one or two boxes had to be opened to provide meals on the approach or return marches. This was facilitated by having five or six steel trunks in the locks. The plywood box proved too expensive a packing material. It may be a better idea to try old four-gallon tins which can be obtained in large quantities, each for about Rs. 2. Two of these tins can be packed to form one 60-lb. porter load. They are easily sealed by soldering. The disadvantage is that they are more difficult to pack and easily damaged carelessly handled.

APPENDIX "D"

LIST OF MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AND MEDICAMENTS

(By Dr. A. N. D. Nanavati)

Notes :

(1) The quantities given are not the actual quantities carried, but the amounts considered necessary in the light of experience.

(2) Requirements of drugs for the local population are based on a march of 22 days, i.e., about the 20 days we stopped at, or near enough, to villages with a fairly heavy "sick parade". For a longer or shorter route march, proportionate adjustments would be necessary.

(3) Trade names or manufacturers' names of preferred product are given in brackets.

(4) Plastic spray or dropper bottles are indispensable, especially the one-ounce variety, for dispensing T. Iodine, Mist-Stimulants, etc. The closure must be firm and preferably of unbreakable material, and each bottle should be individually tested for proper seal, before it is used.

(5) *Vitamins* : If enough fresh foods are available, vitamins are hardly necessary, except for the local population. Owing to the predominance of tinned foods, complaints of stomatitis, etc. are not infrequent. B-Complex forte, orally is usually adequate, Ca. Pantothenate is a good stand-by for obstinate cases.

(6) *Constipation* : Mountaineers, in common with many other "outdoor types", seem to suffer from a "bowel fixation"; even one day's constipation may trigger off a host of symptoms. A mild vegetable laxative (senna, etc.) is very useful in such cases.

(7) Sore throat is a very common complaint. Ritual gargling with warm saline or KMnO_4 (potassium permanganate solution) may be started from the time of reaching base camp. Large quantities of soothing pastilles are necessary (at least 50-100 per member). Antiseptic pastilles are inadvisable except for individual, persistent cases, as chemical irrigation may occur.

(8) Oxygen cylinders and masks are a 'must'. These were available in the mountaineering equipment and hence are not listed separately.

(9) All members must be immunised against typhoid, cholera, small-pox and preferably typhus : they should receive injections, each four to six weeks apart, of Tetanus toxoid; they should all have their blood grouped. All this must be completed a month before starting.

(10) *Frost-bite* : Very few of us have enough experience to be dogmatic. At times, it is difficult to argue against the weight of tradition and folklore, even when it runs counter to our ideas, like giving boiling hot baths, branding etc. But scientific principles must be kept in mind. Gentle warmth and vasodilatation, both by drugs and physical measures, and gradual raising of the local temperature, should succeed when immediate medical attention is possible. I do not think vasodilators should be pushed to the point of causing throbbing pain.

This causes packing of blood at the margin, with consequent infraction and blistering. Also, these drugs are pointless after an infarct and a line of demarcation have formed, and result only in discomfort to the patient. At this stage, local Priscol may be tried, together with Hirudoid to promote rapid absorption. I may illustrate with my own experience. On the second day after his frost-bite, when we came to Base Camp, I was horrified to see that the Sherpas had started a regime of hot foot-baths for Jungalwala, without my knowledge. I spoke to the leader and to Sonam, explaining that I would not hold myself responsible unless my treatment was followed. With their consent, I spoke to Jungalwala, who readily agreed, especially as he had found the hot baths agonisingly painful. Had the patient been a Sherpa, he might well have preferred his own methods and, inexperienced as I was, I would not have been able to convince him or to insist. On the third day, a line of demarcation appeared on Jungalwala's toe and blisters came up, that is, the infarct which I had hoped to avoid or minimise, was formed. I do not know if the result would have been any different without this treatment. I have not enough experience, but I am certain it did not help him at all.

11. *Slides* : It seems wrong to carry slides without a microscope. These were for making smears for bacterial flora in the cases of persistent sore throats. I also hoped to make blood smears for morphological studies of blood cells. The slides, fixed, could be carried back and studied at leisure. The Bhotias, unfortunately, upset all these plans. (See Chapter IX).

Instruments	Quantity	Indications or Remarks
1. Syringes 10 ml	2 (Nylon autoclavable syringes are	2 preferable)
2. Needles 20 gauge 1½"	12	12
23 gauge 1"	12	12
3. Adapter bivalve	1	1
4. Thomas' thigh splint (large)	1	1
(small)	1	1
5. Kramer wires	6	6
6. Thermometers	2	2
7. Kidney tray	1	1
8. Forceps—Dissecting, toothed	2	(one 6", one 4")
Forceps—Dissecting, serrated	2	(6")
" " Haemostat	24	(assorted sizes)
Sinus	1	1
9. Scalpel-Handle, Bard Parker	2	size 3
10. " blades	4	packets (assorted sizes)
11. Scissors—dressing (tailors)	2	2
" dissecting	2	(3" and 2" blade, each with one blunt and one pointed end).
" iris, straight	1	(for trimming small wounds, they are ideal)
12. Bone cutting forceps	1	1
13. Saw—amputation	1	1

Instruments				Quantity	Indications or Remarks
14.	Needles—Suture	..		3 packets	(assorted)
15.	Suture—Chromic catgut (20-40 day)			6 tubes.	
	„ Nylon or silk	..	..	5 yards.	
16.	Plasma infusion sets	..	..	3	(pre-sterilized & packed)
17.	Gloves, surgical	..	..	6 pairs	
18.	Catheters, rubber	..	..	2	
19.	Hot-water bottles, rubber	..	..	3	
20.	Atomiser	..	..	1	(plastic spray bottle)
21.	Stretcher (light-weight, folding)	..	..	1	
22.	Tourniquet	..	..	2	
23.	Sphygmomanometer	..	..	1	
24.	Stethoscope	..	..	1	
25.	Winchester torch and head mirror	..	..	1	
26.	Winchester torch, cells & bulbs for			2 sets	
27.	Towel Clips	..	..	4 sets	
28.	Auriscopes	..	..	2	large and small
29.	Mouth gag	..	..	1	
30.	Ryle's tube	..	..	2	
31.	Retractors	..	..	2	Langen-Beck's or any suitable type.
32.	Mask Schimmel Busch	..	..	1	
33.	Dropper bottles	..	..	24	plastic
34.	Test tubes	..	..	2	
35.	Microscope slides	..	..	1/2	gross
36.	Tongue depressor	..	..	1	heavy, angled
B. GENERAL					
37.	Cotton wool absorbent, sterile	..		6 × 1 lb.	packets
	„ „ „	..		24 × 4 lbs.	packets
38.	Gauze sterile	..	..	12 × 4 ozs.	packets
	„ „	..	..	1 × 1 lb.	packets
39.	Lint sterile	..	..	1 × 1 lb.	packets
40.	Shell dressing (army ordnance issue)			6	complete
41.	First field dressing („ „)			12	
42.	Aerosol bombs (DDT) or	..		12	
	Insecticide tins; one gallon	..		2	
	& sprayer	..	..	2	
43.	Bleaching powder	..	..	1 lb.	preferably in small tins.
44.	Water sterilizing outfits	..	..	24	
45.	Spirit lamps	..	..	2	
46.	Small sachels with compartments for bottle—thick canvas with strap (Army Med. Stores—Surgical Haversack)	..	..	2	(These can be made by any tailor)
47.	Safety pins	..	..	1	gross

48. Plastic dropper bottles, spray,
bottles, tablet tubes for 5-10
tabs, etc. as required
49. Small-size pressure cooker for
sterilization 1

C. *MEDICINES*(i) *Vitamins etc.*

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Multi-vitamin tablets (Numerowits TCF) | 1000 | |
| 2. Vit. C. Tab. 50 mg. (Celin, Glaxo) | | |
| | 500 mg. or Cebion E Merck) | 500 |
| 3. Vit. C. Complex tab. (Bivinal, Alembic) | | 300 |
| 4. Nicotinic acid tab. 50 mg. TCF | | 300 |
| 5. Protein concentrate :— | | |
| Progepex (TCF) | 20 bottles | } Strongly recommended as concentrated nutrition but not appreciated by any of the members. |
| Prolypo (TCF) | 20 bottles | |
| 6. Iron tab. (Fersolate, Glaxo) | 300 | |
| 7. Vit. B. Inj. (Berin, Glaxo) | 2 × 6 amps. | |
| 8. Vit. C. Inj. (Celin forte, Glaxo) | | 12 amps. |
| 9. Pelonin Inj. | | 24 „ |
| 10. Kapilan (Glaxo) | | 12 „ |
| 11. Cal. Pantothenate 50 mg. (TCF) | | 12 „ |

(ii) *Antibiotics and drugs for gastro-intestinal disorders*

- | | | |
|--|-------|---|
| 1. Thalazole tabs. (M & B) | .. | 1000 |
| 2. Streptotriad tabs. (M & B) | | 300 |
| 3. Streptomycin oral tabs. (Glaxo) | | 100 |
| 4. Entero-vioform tabs. | .. | 250 |
| 5. Nivembin tabs. (M&B) | .. | 250 |
| 6. Ultra carbon tabs. (E. Merck) | | 200 |
| 7. Vegilax (B.D.H. Veg. laxative, Glaxenna, Glaxo) | .. | 300 |
| 8. Alliasatin (Sandoz) tabs. | .. | 30 |
| 9. Collokaolin (BDH) | .. | 6 lbs; about 100 doses made up in single dose, 1 oz. packets. |
| 10. Bellergal, Bellafoline (Sandoz) tabs. | | 100 |
| 11. Chlorodyne | | 5 × 1 oz. |
| 12. Antrenyl (Sandoz) tabs. | | 30 tabs. |

(iii) *Antibiotics, general*

- | | | |
|--|-------|---------------|
| 1. Penicillin Procaine fortified (Sclomen Glaxo) | | 14 × 5 vials. |
| 2. Penicillin Procaine Streptomycin (Sclomycin, Glaxo) | | 2 × 5 vials. |

3. Estopen (Glaxo)	2 × 5 vials.
4. Streptomycin & Dihydrostreptomycin, (Glaxo)	4 × 5 vials.
5. Benzathine Penicillin (Benapen, Glaxo)	2 × 5 vials
6. Crystapen V tablets (Glaxo)	500
7. Sulfatriad tablets (M & B)	500
8. Chloromycetin (Chloromex, Dumex)	300
9. Achromycin (Lederle) caps.	100
10. Elkosin (Ciba)	250
11. Camoquin (Parke Davis) tabs.	700
12. Quinine hydrochlor. inj. ..	12 maps.

(iv) *Analgesics, sedatives, etc.*

1. Aspirin tabs.	300
2. Codopyrin (Glaxo) tabs.	500
3. A P C tabs. (BDH) ..	300
4. Optalidon (Sandoz) ..	100
5. Cibalgine tabs. (Ciba) ..	100
6. Soneryl (M & B) ..	50
7. Sonergan (M & B) ..	50
8. Gardenal (M & B) ..	50
9. Plessonal (Sandoz) ..	50
10. Morphine 1/4 gr. ampoules	24
11. Omnopon Tubunocom for self-injection (Wyeth)	24
12. Adelphane, tranquilliser tabs. (Ciba)	50

(v) *For altitude sickness and anti-allergic*

1. Avomine (M & B) ..	200
2. Marzine (B. W. & Co.) ..	100
3. Antistine (Ciba)	100
4. Phenergan (Cream (M&B)	10 tubes.
5. Largactil (M & B) ..	100
6. Stemetil (M & B) ..	100
7. Adrenaline inj.	12 amps.

(vi) *Vasodilators—for frostbite, chilblains,, etc. and drugs for CVS.*

1. Prisol tab. (Ciba) ..	100
2. Prisol ointment (Ciba) ..	12 tubes
3. Prisol inj. (Ciba) ..	10 amps.
4. Papaverine amps. (E. Merck)	10 amps.
5. Frostbite solution (Army)	3 bottles.
6. Heparin (for above) ..	3 vials (1000 units each)
7. Ca. Gluconate (Sandoz) ..	25 amps.
8. Ephedrine Hydr tab. ..	50
9. Digoxin tab. (B and W & Co.)	25
10. Aminophylline	12 amps.

11. Coagulen Ciba	10 amps.
12. Coramine inj. (Ciba) ..	20 amps.
13. Atropine sulph. inj. ..	12 amps.
(vii) <i>Stimulants</i>	
1. Coramine caffeine tabs. ..	40
2. Dexedrine tab.	50
3. Ritalin tabs. (Sandoz) ..	50
4. Efcorlin tab. (Glaxo) ..	30
5. Spt. ammonia aromaticus ..	1 lb. in 1 oz. bottles.
6. Plasma	3 bottles.
7. Dextran	3 bottles.
8. Glucose saline (I.V.) ..	3 bottles.
(vii) <i>Skin lotions, etc.</i>	
1. Antiseptic cream (propamidine in triple creampacks with anthisan and phener- gan)	20 packs. These were very use- ful and handy.
2. Cibazol ointment ..	5 tubes.
3. Nupercaine ointment ..	5 tubes.
4. Algipan ointment (Wyeth)	10 tubes.
5. Iodex, Wintogeno, etc. ..	10 tubes.
6. Medicated dusting powder, prickly-heat powder etc.	20 small tins.
7. Cibazol dusting powder ..	10 packs.
8. Caladryl, Anthical etc. lotions	5 bottles.
9. Lacto-calamine (Crooke's)	5 bottles.
10. Calamine powder	1 lb.
11. Vaseline	20 × 4 ozs. bottles.
12. Lanoline ointment ..	20 tubes.
13. Hirudoid ointment ..	4 tubes.
14. Aureomycin ointment (Lederle)	5 tubes.
15. Aureomycin eye ointment (Lederle)	5 tubes.
16. Locula eye drops	10 bottles.
17. Guttæ zinc boric in plastic bottles	5 × 1 oz. bottle
18. Efcorlin and Neomycin eye/ear drops	5 bottles.
19. Tao Apin glacier cream ..	20 tubes.
20. Mysterphone and cortisone eye oint.	2 bottles.
(x) <i>Miscellaneous</i>	
1. Normal Saline Amps. ..	50
2. Dist. Water Amps. ..	50
3. Antivenin (Snake-bite sets)	3 sets.
4. Novocaine or Sevicaine (Glaxo)	2 × 10 ml. vials.
5. Tetanus Antiserum 3000 units	12 amps.
" " 30-50,000 units	12 amps.
6. Sod. Pentothal I.V. ..	3 amps.
7. Anaesthetic aether ..	1 lb.

8. 3·3 % So. Citrate	10 amps. of 25 ml.
9. Inhalers (Vicks, Benzedrine, etc.)	15
10. Clinitest set for urine sugar	1
11. Glacial acetic acid	2 oz.
12. Tr. Iodine	2 lbs.
13. Tr. Benzoin	1 lb.
14. Insect repellent cream or lotion (Mycol BDH)	20 bottles small.
15. Fenox, Vasylox nasal drops	10 bottles.
16. Mendel's throat paint	4 bottles.
17. Pot. Permang. Cryst.	12 × 1 oz. pkt.
18. Throat pastilles, (Vox, etc.)	1000 pastilles
19. Dequadin antiseptic lozenges (Sucrets, etc.)	100

APPENDIX 'E'

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Bombay Office

Donations received from :

S. No.	Address	Item
1.	Bata/Cuthbertson & Harper, 10, Government Place, Calcutta.	Marching boots.
2.	Mr. Bhide, Victory Flask Co. (Pvt.) Ltd., 208, Lady Jamshedji Rd., Bombay-16.	Thermos flasks. Water bottles.
3.	Britannia Biscuit Company, Reay Road, Bombay.	Biscuits.
4.	Cadbury Fry (India) P. Ltd., Bombay.	Chocolates.
5.	Caltex India Limited, 24 Janpath, New Delhi.	Petrol. Kerosene oil.
6.	M/s. Ciba Ag., Basle, Switzerland	Prisol. ointment.
7.	D. & P. Products, Bombay-Agra Road, Bombay.	(i) Tinned fruits. (ii) Soups. (iii) Jams/Marmalades. (iv) Tomato juice. (v) Green peas. (vi) Laganshala.
8.	Deval Utensils Factory, 15/1, Karve Road, Poona-4.	(i) Utensils. (ii) Dessert forks. (iii) Water jug. (iv) Coffee spoons. (v) Salt spoons. (vi) Tea strainer with handle. (vii) Different size bowls.
9.	Ebrahim Currim & Sons, Princess St., Bombay.	Umbrellas.
10.	Ganges Rope Co., 2, Fairlie Place, Calcutta.	Rope Manila. (diam 6 mm.)
11.	Garware Plastics, Sandhurst Bridge, Bombay-7.	Plastic bags. Plastic mugs.
12.	Harnarain Gopinath, C. Place, New Delhi. ..	Pickles assorted

- | | |
|---|---|
| 13. Hindustan Breakfast Mfg. Factory, P. B. 1025, Subzi Mandi, Delhi. | (i) Corn flakes;
(ii) Wheat flakes;
(iii) Rice flakes;
(iv) Oats flakes. |
| 14. Hindustan Lever Limited, Currimbhoy Rd., Bombay-1. | Green peas. |
| 15. Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd., Crescent House, Ballard Estate, Bombay. | Black alkathene. |
| 16. Imperial Tobacco Co., Ltd., 37, Chowringhee, Calcutta-16. | Cigarettes. |
| 17. Indian Coffee Board, Tamtagowda Rd., Bangalore-1. | Coffee powder. |
| 18. International Wool Secretariat, New Delhi | Some woollen garments. |
| 19. Jhankar Radio Manufacturers, Indian Plastics Ltd., Poiser Bridge, Bombay-67. | Jhankar transistor radio-set. |
| 20. John Fleming & Co., Bastion Road, Bombay. | (i) Paints—blue
white, red and
green.
(ii) Paint brushes.
Skimmed Milk. |
| 21. Kaira Dist. Cooperative Milk Producer's Union, Anand. | |
| 22. Kodak Limited, Kodak House, D. Naoroji Road, Bombay-1. | Film
(i) 16 mm. movie.
(ii) 35 mm. Colour.
(iii) 35 mm. B&W.
(iv) 120 size. |
| 23. M/s. Lalimli Woollen Mills, Kanpur. | (i) Pullovers.
(ii) Stockings, light.
(iii) Woollen fabrics. |
| 24. M/s. Midland Fruit and Vegetable Products (India), Mathura. | Jam and fruit. |
| 25. Noble Stationery Mart, Parsee Bazar Street, Bombay. | Entire stationery. |
| 26. Ogale Glass Works, Ltd., (Distt. N. Satara) .. | Hurricane lanterns. |
| 27. Philips India, Ltd., 7, Justice Chandra Madhab Road, Calcutta-20. | Philips transistor radio-set. |
| 28. Popular Sola Hat Works, Carnac Road, Bombay-3. | Rain-coats. |
| 29. Prabhat Stoves, Noble Chambers, Parsee Bazar Street, Bombay. | Stoves. |
| 30. Prabhat Stoves, Noble Chambers, Parsee Bazaar, Bombay. | Burner covers.
Petromax. plastic
funnels. |
| 31. Pressure Cookers & Elec. Appliances, United India Bldg., Sir. P. M. Road, Bombay. | Pressure cookers. |
| 32. M/s. Pure Products & Madhu Canning, Worli, Bombay-18. | Tinned fruits. |
| 33. Rolex Watch Co., 123, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay-1. | Watches. |

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 34. Shaw Wallace & Co., 3, Wittet Road,
Bombay-11. | Yeast. |
| 25. Tata Chemicals Ltd., Bruce Street, Fort,
Bombay-1. | Salt. |
| 36. Times of India | Picture post-cards. |
| 37. Union Carbide India, Limited, Laxmi Build-
ing, Sir P.M. Road, Bombay-1. | { Torches.
Cells.
Bulbs. |
| 38. Wallace Flour Mills, 9, Wallace St., Fort,
Bombay-1. | Atta.
Wheat flour. |
| 39. M/s. Wander Ag., Berne, Switzerland | -- Sunburn cream. |
| 40. Warden & Company, Sandhurst Road,
Bombay. | Ground sheets. |

(MEDICINES)

Medicines Received From :

1. Alembic Chemical Works, Co., Ltd.,
Laxmi Building, P. Mehta Road,
Bombay-1.
2. Boots Pure Drug Co., (India) Pvt., Ltd.,
Asian Building, Nicol Road,
Bombay-1.
3. British Drug House (India) Pvt., Ltd.,
Imperial Chemical House,
Graham Road, Bombay-1.
4. Capco (Private) Limited,
E. Merck Deptt.,
Meher House, Cawasji Patel Street,
Bombay-1.
5. Ciba Pharma (Private) Limited,
14, J. Tata Road,
Bombay-1.
6. Geoffrey Manners & Co. (Pvt.) Ltd.,
Forbes Building, Home Street,
Bombay-1.
7. Glaxo Laboratories (India) Pvt., Ltd.,
Worli Road,
Bombay-18.
8. Glaxo Laboratories Limited,
5/4B, Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi.
(10/3, Asaf Ali Road,—Medical Deptt.)
9. Lederle Laboratories (India) Pvt., Ltd.,
Queens' Road,
Bombay-1.
10. May and Baker (India) Pvt., Ltd.,
Karimji House, P. Mehta Road,
Bombay-1.

11. May and Baker, Limited (Delhi Branch)
12. May and Baker (India) (P) Ltd., Chaudhury Building,
K-Block, Connaught Circus, New Delhi.
13. Parke Davis (India) Pvt. Ltd.,
Canada Building, D. Naoroji Road,
Bombay-1.
14. Pfizer Pvt., Ltd., (Dumex),
Jawaharlal Nehru Mansion,
3/15J, Ajmeri Gate Extension, New Delhi.
15. Pharmed Private Limited
141, Fort Street,
Bombay-1.
16. Sandoz Products (Private) Limited,
3, Wittet Road, Bombay-1.
17. Teddington Chemical Factory (Pvt. Ltd.),
Suren Road,
Bombay-58.

*Various Government and non-Government organisations who helped the
Annapurna III Expedition.*

1. Air Headquarters.
2. Ambassador and officials of the Indian Embassy, Kathmandu.
3. Army Headquarters.
4. Director-General, Armed Forces Medical Services.
5. Geological Survey of India.
6. The Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling.
7. Naval Headquarters.
8. Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research, Switzerland.

Individuals who helped the Expedition

1. Rear Admiral A. K. Chatterjee, Deputy Chief of Naval Staff.
2. Lt. Cdr. A. S. Sahi, I.N., Bombay.
3. Mr. B. P. Mathur, Deputy A.F.I.O.
4. Shri B. R. Gulati, Ministry of Defence, New Delhi.
5. Group Capt. Chandran, Station Commander, New Delhi.
6. Mrs. D. Mangat, Bombay.
7. Shri D. B. Chhetri, Pokhra.
8. Shri Gaya Dhar Prasad, New Delhi.
9. Lt.-Col. Dharam Pal Singh, New Delhi.
10. Cdr. D. R. Shepherd, I.N., Bombay.
11. Lt.-Cdr. G. Isacs, I.N., Bombay.
12. Brig. Gyan Singh, Darjeeling.
13. Major Harbans Lal, Inter-Services Organisation, Army Headquarters,
New Delhi.
14. Major Inder Singh, Pokhra.
15. Lt.-Col. J.O.M. Roberts, British Embassy, Kathmandu.
16. Cdr. J.S.M. Atkinson, I.N., New Delhi.
17. S.C.I.O. Joginder Singh, I.N., Bombay.

18. Commodore K. R. Nair, I.N., Naval Headquarters, New Delhi.
19. Instr-Captain K. S. Rao, Naval Headquarters, New Delhi.
20. Shri K. S. Rawat, New Delhi.
21. Mr. M. L. Makkar, S.C.I.O., I.N., Bombay.
22. Shri O. P. Sharma, Teacher, Lawrence School, Sanawar, Simla Hills.
23. Captain R. Pratap, "I.N.S. Hamla," Bombay.
24. Shri R. C. Thapar, New Delhi.
25. Lt. Cdr. R. S. Mehta, "I.N.S. India", New Delhi.
26. Wg/Cmmdr. S. Mullick, P.R.O, I.A.F.
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Lt. Kohli started his mountaineering career in April 1956 by taking the basic course at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute. Soon after, he joined the advance course and went with the Indian Karakoram Expedition to Saser Kangri (25,175 ft.), Eastern Karakorams, led by the late Maj. Jayal. In April-May 1959, he organised and led the Naval Expedition to Nanda Kot (22,510 ft.) in which along with Shri K. P. Sharma, Chief Yeoman of Signals, he succeeded in reaching the summit. He participated in the advance-cum-pre-Everest expedition course in 1959. A year later, as a member of the first Indian Everest Expedition, he was in the second summit party which spent two memorable days at South Col (26,000 ft.).

Lt. Kohli was Deputy Leader of the second Indian Everest Expedition (1962). Along with Shri Sonam Gyatso and Shri Hari Dang, he spent three nights at a height of 27,650 ft., and set an endurance record for staying so long at such a great height. They were beaten back by a terrible blizzard only 400 ft. short of their goal.

